

REMINISCENCES
OF
METHODISM IN WEST JERSEY.

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New-York :
PUBLISHED BY LANE & SCOTT,
200 Mulberry-street.
INTER.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1849, by

LANE & SCOTT,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern
District of New-York.

TO THE READER.

THIS work has increased, as our researches have been extended, until we have been forced to the conclusion that one book could not contain the matter we ought to exhibit; and, therefore, we send forth this volume with the understanding that if encouragement be afforded, a second may be expected in due time.

The difficulty necessarily attendant upon the collection of material for the work, has been made more trying to the writer by a feeble state of health. But if we cannot do all we desire, from this, or any other cause, we shall do that which we can. We have made every effort to secure accuracy in the details of our narrative; and although we cannot hope to have avoided errors entirely, we are assured that we have fallen into none against which care and pains could guard us.

The title, "Reminiscences," is more in accordance with the nature of this work, than either that of Annals, History, or Sketches; for the reason that our collection of facts is gathered chiefly from the remembrances of the aged; and presents, by way of memento, memoirs, either printed in the Minutes long ago, or gathered from the sources referred to, of those preachers and others who may be mentioned. To confirm our souls in the love of God and truth, in the love of Methodism and its institutions; to edify in righteousness all who may read; is a summary of our motives in gathering, and presenting to the church and the world these Reminiscences of Methodism.

THE AUTHOR.

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REMINISCENCES OF METHODISM IN WEST JERSEY.

CHAPTER I.

I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger.—GEN. xvii. 8.

ABOUT the year of grace 1678, Salem, the chief town of West Jersey, began to become the refuge of religion! The chief proprietors were men of piety; the first settlers sought peace in this little city of peace. Hear the language of John, Lord Fenwick, head of the colony:—"But blessed be the God of heaven and earth who hath showed us his mercy; praised be his name for ever: he hath stirred, by his Spirit, the hearts of many good people to pity us—made them willing to come and join with us, sitting down together in this tract of land."—*Johnson's History of Salem.*

Here is seen the very spirit of the first settlers. They were pious souls; and thus our West Jersey was possessed, not by fraud or violence,

not baptized in blood ! but secured by honourable purchase, regal grant, and religious effort. Like Abraham of old, these men were strangers in a strange land : and the words of the promise made to the patriarch were applicable to them, for they trusted in God ! This land became their Canaan ; and, although they felt the sorrow of heart which a stranger knoweth, we discover that they were comforted in the possession of this goodly heritage by a faith in the Lord, as were those who lived in the days of old.

Was not the land blessed for their sakes, and thus prepared for the future and glorious introduction and spread of Methodism—the simplest form of Bible religion since the days of the apostles ? Methodism is a grand act of Providence. Contemplated in every aspect—past, present, or future—it is highly interesting : but especially so in the past, where wonder upon wonder stands. Why does man love to search the mouldering archives of the past ? delightedly to follow the annalist in his researches, and live, as it were, in almost buried scenes, and amidst actors almost forgotten ? Is it not because he possesses a spirit *immortal*, which the limits of *one* lifetime cannot satisfy ?

If history is a teacher, surely the pupils of Methodism should be well instructed. The his-

tory of Methodism is full of wonders ; the minute annals of Methodism are not without them—wonders, we mean, in providence and grace. No existing nation or church can exhibit a greater show of *events*, in the same space of time, than the American nation and the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Look at those ten Methodist ministers assembled in conference in Philadelphia, in the month of June, 1773. Listen to the returns of numbers from all parts of the field of their annual labor—but *eleven hundred* souls ! (*Minutes of Conferences.*) In 1844 we could count more than thousands of ministers, and more than a *million* of members ! We began to boast of the *church of a million*, and the Lord permitted us to become unwise, to smite ourselves ; and lo ! one-half is stricken off, and Israel is divided !

Then, in those early days of 1773, and until '84, the "sacrament," and all other "ordinances," were administered only by the Protestant Episcopal Church ministers. Even as it was in England under the Wesleys, so also in America, the preachers were not yet *ordained*, and did not attempt to perform those sacred functions—they sent the people to the "Church parsons !"

The Methodist itinerant was allowed twenty-

four pounds currency per annum, if he could collect it; if not, as now the case, he must go, and do without his salary, no matter what his necessities, or those of his family. They were holy men of God the founders of our Methodism—so conscientious, so scrupulous of the slightest wrong, that they resolved “not to preach a funeral sermon except for those who died in the favour of God.” How truly does this little thing show the purity of their piety, the self-sacrificing spirit which prevailed in their hearts! A resolution of the conference of 1780, which met in Baltimore, Md., speaks loudly for the zeal, untiring and fervent, of those holy men of old; it reads thus:—“Ought not our preachers to speak to every person, one by one, if possible, in the families where they may lodge, before family prayer, or give a family exhortation before reading a chapter of the Scriptures?” The answer is, “They ought.” (*An. Minutes.*) And it is remembered by some how faithfully, fervently, and prudently, this duty was performed whenever circumstances permitted.

At that conference the custom of holding quarterly meetings on Saturday and sabbath received the sanction of a resolution. There and then commenced the temperance movement in America; thus: “Shall we *disown* those of our

friends (members) who will not renounce distilling liquor from grain?" &c. "Yes:"—an emphatic affirmative. Hear them again in 1783: "Shall our members be *permitted to make, sell, or drink, in drams, spirituous liquors?*" The answer to this is, "*By no means; we think it wrong.*" The preachers, by precept and example, are enjoined to teach the people to put away this *evil*. Thus these men of one work went on; showing that *they*, even the despised Methodists, were *first*—the first in America—in almost every good work.

In 1784 the Methodists became a church, adopting the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, &c.

Mr. Asbury, the indefatigable pioneer in the wilderness of this country, was the first bishop in reality, and for many years the only acknowledged bishop, in America; which office he *merited* by his superior qualities of mind, and exceeding *labours* and *sufferings* in the good cause.

The first Annual Conference, held in 1773, appointed John King and William Watters to travel and preach in Jersey—men whose names should be remembered with respect, as the *first* missionaries in New-Jersey, labouring among a people numbering *two hundred*, in all the state, or rather colony.

William Watters was the first native American preacher. Mr. Asbury, and all the other preachers at that time in connexion, were from England. After the regular organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the year 1784, the preacher's salary was *sixty-four* dollars; his wife, if he had one, was allowed the same amount: yet how those good men laboured, until they died in the work! And then how laconic, yet spiritual and full of meaning, is the obituary notice of them in the Annual Minutes—thus: “Caleb B. Pedicord, a man of sorrows, and, like his Master, acquainted with grief; but a man *dead* to the world, and much devoted to God.”

Another reads thus: “George Moir, a man of affliction, but of great patience and resignation, and of an excellent understanding.”—*Bangs' History of Methodism.*

How brief, yet full of meaning, and descriptive of the period, of the age! So far as regarded the Methodist preachers, they were *devoted* to the cause they espoused, even unto death; even as the patriots of the age were devoted to death for the deliverance of their country.

CHAPTER II.

Break forth into singing; yea, sing praises: for the Lord hath done great things.—BIBLE.

AMONG the early Methodist preachers of Jersey, was that wonder of his generation, Benjamin Abbott, born in Pennsylvania in 1732. In about the fortieth year of his age, being a resident of West Jersey, he was converted to God, and was for many years a useful local preacher. In 1789 he joined the travelling connexion, and laboured extensively until 1796, when he was taken to his reward in glory. His last public effort was made at the funeral of Mrs. Paul, in the town of Salem, in the spring of 1796; on which occasion his exhortation was addressed *personally* and chiefly to a Mr. W——, an eminent backslider: the word took effect, and resulted in the return of that soul to God. Mr. Abbott was a man of uncommon piety and strong faith, and the most successful preacher that ever travelled these regions; yet he was “ignorant and unlearned” as regards human literature, while his knowledge of the Scriptures and divine things was unexcelled. His sincerity and faith, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, commanded the reverence of his hearers, and secured

success to his ministrations. Thousands, perhaps, have been awakened, and many hundreds converted, through his instrumentality, both as a local and travelling preacher. The extensive revivals, or *protracted* meetings, then instituted, no doubt gave rise to "camp meetings," for the better conducting of those works of the Lord.

In the year 1789 James O. Cromwell was presiding elder of New-Jersey; and Salem Circuit had Simon Pile, Jethro Johnson, and Sylvester Hutchinson, as preachers. This was, in all probability, a "six weeks' circuit," embracing all West Jersey below Burlington—rather a long ride from the interior starting-point, down to Salem, Bridgeton, Cumberland County, and Cape May. During the year there was a most wonderful work of grace on the circuit; and within the bounds of the present Salem County hundreds were converted. But at this distant period it is impossible to collect the particulars. One of the preachers gave the writer, when quite young, an account, in part, of that great work of God; but, alas! he did not gather fragments of history in those days. The number returned for Salem, for the year, was six hundred and eighty; and in 1790 we find Salem Circuit to number nine hundred and thirty-three! What an increase in one year!

In the same year we find Salem Circuit reduced or divided by Bethel Circuit—old Bethel, on which rode Robert Cann and William Jackson; while on Salem there were Joseph Cromwell and William Dougherty. Judging by the returns in the Minutes, there was not much done for the succeeding five years: but yet the march of Methodism was always onward; if it was slow at times, its spirit was still the spirit of progress.

The above-named preacher, Sylvester Hutchinson, was one of three brothers, all itinerants. Sylvester was a real Boanerges, or “son of thunder;” a man of small stature, but athletic, with voice and strength that never failed, although he always became highly excited when he preached. He lived in the Spirit, always ready; as were, indeed, nearly all the preachers of those days. While he was sitting one day in the house where he lodged temporarily, waiting for the hour of preaching, two young women entered the room to have some *sport* with the *boy* preacher. They began to banter him upon his size and insignificant appearance; when, suddenly lifting his head from a reclining posture, he repeated in slow, solemn tones, a verse of a hymn:—

“My thoughts on awful subjects roll—
 Damnation and the dead:

What horrors seize a guilty soul,
Upon a dying bed !”

The time, the place, the words, and manner of recitation, all combined to produce pungent and lasting convictions ; the young women both immediately fled from the room, weeping, and were without rest or peace until their hearts were given to the Lord. Both ladies, for such they were, joined the then “poor, despised” Methodists.

On a certain day a man on horseback overtook the young preacher riding along the road, and, no doubt, thought to have some fun.

“How do you do ? which way are you travelling ?”

“I do the Lord’s work ; you do the devil’s. I am on the way to heaven ; you are going to hell, where fire and brimstone are the fuel, and the smoke of torment ascendeth for ever and ever.”

The alarmed man put spurs to his horse, and rode away, but was found at the next meeting, weeping among the seekers of religion. He became an eminent servant of God.

Thus did these men of God preach in season and out of season ; in the pulpit and by the wayside ; to all—high and low, rich and poor : one spirit pervaded their souls, one work absorbed their minds and occupied their time.

The next year Sylvester Hutchinson was sent to Chester, in Delaware. He was at one time the presiding elder of the immense northern district extending into Canada. It was winter on his last round there. The rivers were frozen so as to bear the horse ; so he rode upon the ice for miles, and when he reached the Canada shore the snow was two feet deep : but the preacher and his trusty horse toiled on until night, through the woods, by a mere "blazed track," (trees marked with the axe.) The way became more uncertain ; until at length he was fairly *lost* amid the interminable forests of Canada, in the snow, and with dangers all around. From the distance he had travelled, the preacher decided that he could not be many miles from his place of destination ; and he hoped that the people, knowing his punctuality, would conclude that he had lost the track, and turn out to meet him. With this conclusion, he dismounted ; covered himself in his blanket from the wind ; held the bridle in his hand ; and sat down at the trunk of a large tree awaiting the result, committing his life and soul to the Lord. The wolves were heard howling round at a distance, and it was likely that before morning those ravenous beasts would scent the horse, and devour both, unless the preacher

could climb a tree, or the friends should find him. Long seemed the hours, closer came the wolf howls; but his soul was calm—the Lord was with him. The cold was most intense; he kept himself awake by exercising arms and feet around the trunk of the tree; the stars shone brilliantly, and the snow-light rendered objects discernible at some distance. A cry is heard a great way off; another, and another; a wolf howl comes nearer: again those cries break on the frightful stillness; surely that wolf is stealing nigher. Now the distant cries become clear: *lights* are seen: it is the friends in search of the lost presiding elder; he shouts in return; the disappointed wolf gives a last howl, and trots off; the people, with pine torches, draw nigher; they hear the feeble shout of the benumbed man: he is found; he is brought carefully to the house, wrapped in furs; warm drinks or other appliances restore his almost congealed powers; the life of the good man is saved to endure yet greater hardships than a night in the frozen forest. It was about two o'clock when the preacher was found. He had travelled all day without food for himself or horse; now both were fully but prudently supplied; and the next morning the Rev. Sylvester Hutchinson preached at the quarterly meeting

as freely and as powerfully, as though he had not been thus exposed. These were the men of iron constitution—men who seemed to be made for their day ; and most nobly did they sustain the character they bore—faithful in all things appertaining to duty, even unto death itself.

CHAPTER III.

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.—PAUL.

THE Methodist Episcopal Church in Salem was founded about the year 1784. The men chiefly engaged in this blessed work were, Henry Firth, Cor. Mulford, Hugh Smith, John M'Claskey, B. Abbott, Isaac Vaneman, John Murphy, Levi Garrison—names which should be remembered. The venerable Episcopal Church was founded about 1720 ; the names of Dyer, Gandovitt, Kidd, and Weatherby, are remembered among those who aided to build up the Church of England in Salem, even before Methodism was established there : the present edifice of that denomination is an ornament to the town. The Baptist Church was founded, in all probability, in 1743.

During the Revolutionary War, Salem and its vicinity were visited by the British ; several

battles were fought, with various success, and much damage was done by marauders. In 1774, just after the destruction of the taxed tea in Boston harbour, the British sent the brig Greyhound up the river Cohansey, and discharged a load of the obnoxious article at the village of Greenwich. On the night of November 22d, 1774, about forty men, disguised as Indians, came in a body, seized the tea, carried the chests thereof to an adjoining field, piled them up, and set fire to them, burning the whole; while the young men formed a circle around the "bon-fire," exulting in this beautiful "tea party." (*Johnson's Salem.*) Mr. Johnson, author of *Historical Recollections of Salem*, gives the names of those bold young men; the founders of the chief families of the county—such as Elmer, Howell, Fithian, Seely, &c.

Suits were instituted in 1775 for the tea-burning; but the tory prosecutors were defeated by the whigs. So this daring feat only contributed to convince the tories and British that the spirit of opposition to tyranny was not confined to Boston, but pervaded the whole extent of the colonies, even to the obscure Cohansey Creek and the small village of Greenwich. Surely the hand of the Lord was with those people striving for political liberty, even as his Spirit fell upon

all who sought deliverance from spiritual bondage!

The war and its events retarded the progress of Methodism at the time, but eventually prepared the way for its more extended introduction and permanent establishment. The converts were almost compelled to be faithful by the persecution and odium they were called to endure: they were constrained to live near the Lord, for support and consolation.

The early Methodist evangelists carried the gospel to the poor, illiterate, and obscure. Among the pines of West Jersey, the light of the gospel ministry, and, indeed, of the common schoolmasters, were truly needed, as the following tragical occurrence will show:—A certain man resided on the way to the seashore, in Cumberland County, who possessed a large farm and considerable wealth; his family were grown to maturity, and had left the old man and his aged wife, with a servant or two, in the homestead. In due time the old lady died; the neighbours and friends were invited to attend the funeral; and, as was customary, when a minister could be obtained, either prayers were offered, or a discourse was made, in the house, before the burial. Crowds attended, the house was filled, all were anxiously waiting; but there was no

preacher. At last the old man arose, saying, "Well, something must be done; the old woman must be buried. We will try to pray, anyhow." He began to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven—Now I lay me down to sleep;" ending with, "For what we are about to receive of thy creature comforts, O Lord, make us thankful." One lively person present exclaimed, "O dear! is he a-going to make us *eat* the old woman?" This was too much for the gravity of the crowd, and a shout of laughter followed; which exceedingly disconcerted the poor old husband, who had not the most remote idea of anything out of order. There was no minister; "something must be done;" and he had attempted it himself. The serious portion of the people now came forward, and, silencing the excitement, conducted the remaining services with propriety and decency. This is not a solitary instance of the astonishing want of information with which the Methodist preachers were obliged to strive, in order to introduce the knowledge of God, and his salvation from sin and ignorance of all kinds. What patience, meekness, humility, and, indeed, every grace, were required to instruct such a people!

On the main road to M., by the way-side, stood a low, miserable, log cabin: the window fronting the road was ornamented with sundry

cakes, tumblers, or cups, with candies ; and over the little gate was a small board with a painting of a bottle pouring out a white stream, to represent beer ; beneath which specimen of artistic skill was the sentence, " Cakes and beer sold here." Old mother F., and her poor drunken husband ; her dirty children, three or four in number ; her own ragged calico gown, never changed Saturday or Sunday ; with all the painful particulars of her life, and struggles to keep life in herself and children ; were well known on that road. At length, on one warm day, a Methodist preacher came along, stopped his horse, and entered into conversation with the poor woman, to the great *fright* of the children, who all fled into the woods and hid, as though an Indian war chief and his party were attacking the cabin.

The preacher, brother B., talked kindly to her, and inquired if she went to meeting. No, indeed, she had no clothes for herself or children fit to go ; and it took all her time to keep the family from starving ! Her husband was an idle, good-for-nothing dog, and did little but get drunk. She could not shut up her shop on Sunday, for that was her best sale day. The man of God preached the law of God, and awakened the woman's fears ; preached the gospel, offered Jesus and glory, until the woman's heart melted ;

and when the preacher prayed with her, she promised, as he departed, to "smart up" her dress and go to meeting. Mother F. was true to her promise. She searched for an old Bible, read it at every leisure hour; washed her clothes, and ironed them late on Saturday night; and on the sabbath locked her children in the house, and went to the Methodist Church. In a short time she sought and found the Lord; never opened her shop on sabbath again; and prospered to her own amazement, and that of every one else. Her husband quit rum, and took to work; and blessed was the day of the preacher's visit.

Some years afterward, a person inquired of her, "Why, Mother F., you wear good clothes, your children are dressed well, and yet you don't keep shop on Sunday?"

"Ah, the Lord has done it all. Now I have plenty of all I want, and Jesus too. Glory be to his name! I lock the children in the house, and *he* takes care of them. I fear no evil now."

Thus she lived happy, and full of faith and joy. On one occasion, at a protracted meeting, news came that one of her children had fallen down into the well.

"No, it is not my child," she said "I gave my children to the care of the Lord, and he always keeps them; I **know** it is not my child."

The event proved she was correct : the child belonged to a neighbour ; and this event served to confirm the old Christian in her good way, whatever may be objected to it on the ground of enthusiasm. The Lord multiplied such enthusiasts in those days ; for strange tales could be written on this same subject.

By zeal, by condescension, and by *sufferings*, did those true-hearted messengers of Heaven's mercy prove themselves the sent of God, the angels of the church. To the poor, literally, the gospel was preached : they were among the *first* to receive the messengers of grace ; and by the grace thus proffered and received, many a noble church has been formed where the work *began* in a log cabin and a single family. The preachers were careful to receive none into the church without satisfactory evidence of sound conversion, or sincere desires for good as "seekers." And if any, after being admitted into full membership, violated the rules or neglected duty, after suitable reproof, they were excluded. Violation of the rule on marriage by a member with an unconverted person, was always punished with expulsion. But sometimes the rule operated unhappily ; for a young woman being expelled from the church for marrying a young man of excellent moral

conduct, offended a large circle of relatives : and this was often the case ; so that the rule was rescinded. The merciful and conciliatory *reproof*, instead of the severity of exclusion, tends to bring the whole family, ultimately, into the church ; whereas the other course drove many away, perhaps for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

I send an angel before thee : obey his voice ; forsake him not.—BIBLE.

AN early day in the month of March, 1796, was set apart as a time of fasting and prayer, on account of the great wickedness prevailing throughout the land. It was desired that the day should be observed as a sabbath. The occasion is stated in the “Address” of the conference to the churches, in a long and startling list of sins. (*Bangs’ History of Methodism*, vol. ii, p. 22.) How severe were those devout ministers of God : not afraid to call things by their right names ; no daubers with untempered mortar, to build up the walls of a church which should soon tumble about their ears ! No. Severely good themselves, the people of their flocks must be good also. In October, of the same year,

was a day of "thanksgiving" to be observed, for blessings temporal, and especially for the gracious work of salvation witnessed in so many portions of the continent; and in West Jersey those days are not forgotten. Old people tell of the respectful regard which was then given to the requests of their pastors—a point in which present habits could be *mended*. Alas! for this money-making spirit! how it unfits men for the requirements and duties of religion. What, quit work of a week day and go to church! Why, a holyday almost eighteen hundred years old is *now* disregarded if it come on Saturday. People must go to market; must make money when they can. Ah, good old Christmas, how art thou insulted in our degenerate days! As to church-ordered holydays, as thanksgiving, &c., we have seen, perhaps *fifty*, out of a usual assembly of a thousand, gathered on such a day. The usual cry is, Superstition! O it is all superstition to keep such days and times. Is it really superstition to worship God; to set apart any time, or day, or place, for this? Surely not. How wise, civilized, and refined, mankind may become!

Old "Bethel Circuit," in West Jersey, was formed first in the year 1790; Cape May Circuit, in 1796. Bethel Circuit, in 1796, returned

three hundred and forty members. This circuit, no doubt, included all that extensive region of country afterward known as Old Gloucester County. Salem Circuit returned four hundred and seventy-six : embracing, perhaps, all Salem County. All New-Jersey, from Salem up ; and portions of New-York including Newburgh, Herkimer, and Albany ; were embraced in a single district. From the town of Salem, in West Jersey, to the city of Albany, in New-York, was rather a long ride to be performed on horseback, and attend the quarterly meetings at every circuit. Rev. John M'Claskey was elder. The preachers were—Salem, Robert M'Coy, Peter Vannest ; Bethel Circuit, John Ragan, Anthony Turk. In 1797 William M'Lenahan and Benjamin Fisler rode Salem Circuit ; and on Bethel were Robert Hutchinson and Richard Sneath. The numbers for this year on Bethel, were six hundred and forty-six ; Salem, four hundred and fifty-two : and New-Jersey, as a whole, returned two thousand four hundred and thirty-eight whites, and one hundred and twenty-seven blacks. The term presiding elder was now first employed, and applied to those having charge of a number of circuits or stations, called a district, as now. In 1798 Rev. B. Fisler located, on account of failing health : indeed

many of the young ministers who volunteered for the cold, dreary regions, of Nova Scotia, were broken down by the severity of their labours and exposure; and this was the case with several who promised great usefulness in the future. But many more located on account of "family affairs;" that is, an increasing family and inadequate support. Those ministers continued for a lifetime to preach in the local ranks.

Among those local ministers to whom the author is indebted for sketches of the introduction of Methodism into Salem and Gloucester counties, the Rev. J. N——, of Salem County, the most distinguished for talents, attainments, and efficient labours, must be permitted to speak in his own admirable way; and my readers will be gratified by the perusal of the following notes, written and forwarded for this work at the earnest request of the author. This excellent brother, whose modesty is only equalled by his personal merit, states that his father and family came to reside in Gloucester County, New-Jersey, about fifty-seven years since. His father was a man of education and sound judgment, respected very highly by his neighbours and friends; to such an extent, indeed, that when the Methodist preachers came first into

that region, the people requested Mr. N—— to go and hear them preach, in order that his opinion might determine the danger or safety of listening to persons called “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” &c. On the return of the old gentleman, (who had been brought up a Presbyterian,) some of the neighbours came to hear about the Methodist preachers. His reply was, “They are men of God; sent out to revive primitive Christianity, in spirit, doctrine, and practice.” As certainly as one sinner can destroy much good, so one wise man can prevent a great amount of evil. The old gentleman, his wife, and family, and the people generally, went to the meetings. On one occasion the mother of our informant went to a quarterly meeting held in Old Bethel Church, but recently built; and there she obtained religion. But as the interest of the sketch increases, the compiler prefers giving it in the language of his old friend:— “Some person, unfriendly to the Methodists, came to my father and told him that his wife was cutting up great capers at the meeting, and if she belonged to *him* he would certainly *flog* her when she returned home. On the same day, another person, a wealthy gentleman, met my father, and congratulated him on the conversion of his wife; observing, ‘I would give

one of my best farms to obtain the same blessing, and be as happy as she is.' I heard my father say, All this is very strange! And when my mother came home, he said that her countenance fairly *glowed* with something he never saw before: and from that time he went to meeting with my mother, who joined the small class formed at Clonmell. She was very gifted in public prayer and exhortation, frequently exercising in the public meetings. It was not long before my father united with the Methodists, and was appointed class-leader. He took an active part in the affairs of the church; his house was a *home* for the preachers who came to that part of the country, for more than twenty years; and he assisted in conveying the materials for the erection of the old stone church near Swedesboro'. The preachers I can recollect, were Robert Cann, Robert and Sylvester Hutchinson, Dr. B. Fisler, Gamaliel Bailey; and the first presiding elder I can remember was Rev. John M'Claskey. When I was about sixteen years of age, a quarterly meeting was held at Clonmell; Bishop Asbury was there, as also was the presiding elder, Mr. M'Claskey. There lived in the neighbourhood a man by the name of Patrick Field, who had formerly been acquaint-

ed with Mr. M'Claskey; indeed, they were both old countrymen: however, they were old cronies in crime, playing cards, gambling, drinking, &c. But M'Claskey had become religious—a preacher; and now came to see his old comrade, and invited him to the meeting. Patrick accepted the invitation, on condition that he could get a place to put up at; so M'Claskey brought him to my father's. Patrick was a Roman Catholic, and had felt no serious impressions at the Saturday meetings. On Sunday morning, when invited to breakfast, Mr. M'Claskey spoke to him on the subject of religion; and when he offered to pray for him, Patrick was convicted. He thought, and expressed it, 'Why, how is it that the preacher feels such a desire for my salvation, and I am so indifferent on the subject myself?' His convictions became more deep and painful, until the hour of preaching came; the house could not hold the people, and the meeting was held in the adjoining woods. This was a day of the Lord's power. Many fell to the ground and cried aloud for mercy; young men climbed the trees in order to see into the midst of the congregation; while the greatest excitement prevailed. During the service or preaching, an awful thunder-storm arose; a peal of thunder rolled over the assembly. The

very earth trembled ; those in the trees attempted to slide down ; many fell ; others ran in every direction ; that terrific day I shall never forget. In the mean time, Patrick Field had obtained a blessing ; and, in the midst of the confusion and crowd, was shouting in so boisterous a manner that Mr. M'Claskey stopped preaching for some time, and told the people that Patrick Field was outpreaching him. One young woman cried aloud for mercy as she fell to the ground ; and her brother, a large, strong man, rushed into the crowd and carried her away. Many were converted, and it was a time of refreshing to the Lord's people."

Such was the character of the meetings held in those days. At every quarterly meeting, perhaps, some few, or often a great number, would be converted to God ! The old-time Methodists would travel forty miles to a meeting of this kind, and think naught of the distance, time, or loss ! To them a blessed meeting was sufficient compensation for any expense or trouble. The local preachers of that day, and in that part of the country, were, Benjamin Weatherby, David Abbott, Nathaniel Chew, and a few others ; and among the most useful and distinguished was, soon after he joined the church and was licensed, the brother who thus continues his narrative :—

“In 1809 I removed to a farm near Sharps-town, Salem County, and joined, by certificate, the class at old Pilesgrove meeting-house; where there was a goodly number joined in society. Rev. James Moore and Wm. C. Fisher were preachers on Salem Circuit at the time. The churches then standing on Salem Circuit were, the old Clonmell, a frame building, with gallery in front only; Adams’ Meeting, or the stone church near Swedesboro’; Perkintown, a small one story frame house, without gallery; Pilesgrove, a one story frame house, small gallery in front; Lower Penn’s Neck, a frame house thirty-five by forty-five feet; Salem Town, a frame house of moderate dimensions; Friendship, a one story log church; Bridgeton, a frame house of moderate size—nine churches, besides the other appointments; all filled by two preachers in a four-weeks’ round. No provision was made at that day for table expenses or fuel; yet I have copies of letters, sent to the classes, urging the great necessity of supplying the preachers. On the same ground there are now (1847) eighteen churches, chiefly brick, large, and quite commodious. There are four circuits and five stations. In that day there was no place in Woodstown for the Methodists to hold meetings; and as Rev. Wm. Fisher was universally beloved, I

went with him and obtained the school-house, where he held a few meetings on a week-day evening. About 1812, brother John Stiles, a man of precious memory, removed into the town, and opened his house for preaching. We held service there on Sunday afternoons, and I often had happy seasons there. A class was soon formed; and the travelling preachers came regularly after we had the grant of the school-house in which the services were held. The word of the Lord grew, and in a few years the society built the present church in Woodstown.

“About the year 1810, brother John Boqua, a local preacher, came into the neighbourhood of Ivins Mill, and began preaching in a private house. He was a zealous man of God, of great faith, and the Lord blessed his labours in a wonderful manner. In less than a year there was a class of more than forty members; and throughout all that region, even the sainted Summerfield could not stand higher in the people’s esteem, than did this holy, simple-minded servant of the Lord. The travelling preachers attended the appointment on week-day evenings, and the society sent to Salem, to obtain the aid of the Rev. William Lummis. He preached on the sabbath for some time, before he entered the itinerancy.”

CHAPTER V.

Go set a watchman; let him declare what he seeth.

ISAIAH.

“ALLOWAYSTOWN was a very wicked place: gambling, swearing, drunkenness, and, indeed, all kinds of vice, were universally prevalent. There was no Methodist meeting in the place. About the year 1813 a small class was formed at the distance of a mile, perhaps, from the town. I frequently, by request, went down to preach for the people there. Brother Wm. Lummis first held the meeting at that place and at Quinton’s Bridge. In the year 1815 I made application for the use of the school-house in Allowaystown, and obtained the use of the house for preaching every alternate Sunday; the Baptists had it the intervening sabbaths. Thomas Fox and Daniel Hough, both good men, and local preachers, aided me in filling the appointment. The travelling preachers came, on week-day evening, once in two weeks.

“The Baptists, not content with the use of the school-house *half* the time, gave out an appointment at the regular time of Methodist preaching. The brother who was to preach was frightened, and sent for me: I told the messenger

I could not have any difficulty in a place of worship, but that he might publish that *two* sermons would be preached that day. The time arrived; the house could not hold the people: the Baptist minister delivered a very lengthy discourse. As he concluded, I stepped forward and commenced: the Spirit of God was there; the place became warm; a shout of glory to God broke from several warm-hearted Methodists; the Baptist preacher made for the door, and in his hurry to get out, left his great-coat behind. One of his friends pressed through the crowd to the desk and obtained the coat. I do not recollect that any others left the meeting.

“The course pursued by the Baptists gave considerable dissatisfaction, and many who had been friendly toward them, now attended our meetings. Rev. T. Neal and Rev. E. Page travelled the circuit at this time, and it was arranged by them to hold a two days’ meeting in Allowaystown. A great many had become serious, and came to love-feast; it was love-feast indeed: the meeting altogether was powerful. It was a great day for Methodism. Several obtained religion, and joined the church; among whom were Judge Ray, David String, Samuel Keen, and the most influential persons of the town. Soon after this meeting, I proposed to the

friends the subject of building a church. Many were highly pleased, and subscription papers were drawn up and circulated among the people. At the same time the Baptists did the same thing. Some thought this was done to defeat the purposes of the Methodists; but how that was I know not. The Methodist church was finished in due time.

“When the Rev. C. T. Ford travelled Salem Circuit, in 1840, a great revival took place in Allowaystown, and many were added to the Lord.

“In 1809, brother Lummis went down to Lower Alloways and preached in an old Presbyterian house, where a class was formed. I preached for them, also, for many years. I remember that one winter night when I had an appointment there, it came on to storm; the cold was severe, and it snowed and blew fearfully. I concluded there could be no meeting; but a few zealous friends came to where I was, and of course I went with them; and the zeal of the people for the word of life brought a goodly number out. I found it a gracious season. The church was soon after taken down, and the Methodists, a class of about thirty, held meeting in a small school-house. But Jacob soon arose

too strong. A church was built, large and convenient, with galleries ; and in a few years there was quite a large society and congregation, which is increasing to this day."

The origin of Methodism in Lower Penn's Neck was as follows:—About the year 1782 or 1783, the first class was formed by Benjamin Abbott, and met in an old log house belonging to an aged man by the name of Swanson ; his first name cannot now be recollected by the oldest inhabitant of the neighbourhood. He and his wife, with Catharine Casper, Elizabeth Dixon, Sarah Bright, Wm. Bilderback and wife, and a few others, used to meet in Swanson's house. He was the class-leader. One of the earliest preachers recollected was Ezekiel Cooper. Richard Swaine travelled through that part of the country, succeeding Cooper ; and being too poor to buy a horse, he travelled on foot. Richard Sparks, a principal member of the Presbyterian Church, out of curiosity went to hear the Methodist preachers, and shortly joined the little band. Brother Swanson dying soon after, brother Sparks was appointed leader. As Richard Swaine was, one day, trudging along on foot, carrying his saddlebags on his arm, brother Sparks met him, and inquired why he did not

get a horse. The reply was, that he was "too poor to buy one." Sparks said he had a horse he would sell to him: the preacher replied he had no money; but at home he had a few sheep. So Sparks told him he would let him have the horse, and take his sheep. They soon made the exchange, and brother Swaine rode away with the horse, and brother Sparks took the sheep as pay.

Some years after, the people commenced building a frame church, which was never finished; but they held quarterly meeting, and B. Abbott, a local preacher named Stratton, and many others, were present. The meeting was held in Joseph Cassner's barn: it was a powerful time; the slain of the Lord lay all over the barn floor: at this time many obtained religion, and joined the Methodists. Some time after, a great revival commenced, during the course of which, Edward Dougherty, of Camden, was converted, and remains to this day a useful member in Camden station. The Rev. J. Merrick, presiding elder, was riding along the road one day, when an old Friend accosted him thus,—“Is thee not a public speaker?” He was a person, he replied, who “endeavored to instruct people when he had an opportunity.” “Is thee not a Methodist?” “I belong to that denomination.”

“ Well, I have heard the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, and several others, but I have never heard any like the Methodists.” “ Why so? In what do they differ from the others?” “ Why, they get right into the heart, and there they stick, until they tear it all to pieces.”

Benjamin Abbott then preached in that country; and two wicked men resolved, if Abbott came there again, they would kill him. The friends, or members, entreated Abbott not to preach. He replied, “ I fear them not;” and commenced the service. The two men soon came to the door of the house, with heavy clubs in their hands. When Abbott saw them, he called aloud on the Lord to “ strike those daring sinners.” Both became alarmed, and turned and ran: one fell down; but, by the assistance of their cronies, both got away, so well frightened that they never came to kill Abbott again. At this time Abbott resided in Penn’s Neck. One day he came over to Tobias Casper’s, and told the family that all his children had embraced religion, except his son Elisha; he had been praying for him, and he believed the Lord would *convert* him, or *kill* him! The next day the family heard a great and strange noise, just over the Branch, which separated the two farms. Some of the family thought

the British had come on shore, and were about to kill the people over on that side: but Mrs. Casper went to the door, and hearing the sounds, said, "That is the noise of shouting; it is Elisha Abbott; he is at work along the Branch." She went over to see; and there found that the Lord had indeed converted Elisha, all alone, in the swamp or woods. Mrs. Casper found the young man leaping, shouting, and praising God. His father soon came also; and it was such a time as when the fatted calf was killed to celebrate the prodigal's return.

The husband of Catharine Casper, the woman named, was very much opposed to the Methodists. He hated this new sect, which was everywhere spoken against. He was violently opposed to his wife going to meetings: but she was faithful; taking up the cross daily, and never faltering in her duty. One sabbath-day, while she was gone to Methodist meeting, her husband, Tobias Casper, kindled a fire in the oven. One of his neighbours, Azariah Dixon, came to the house, and seeing the fire blazing from the great mouth of the oven, asked, in amazement, what Casper was about—what he was going to do with the oven. He replied, that "he wanted to heat it nine times hotter than it had ever

been, and he intended to burn his wife in it as soon as she came from meeting." Casper kept up the fire until his wife returned. When she saw it, and inquired what he was going to do with the oven, he said, "To burn you." "Well, if you have more *power* than the Master whom I serve, to keep me out, I will go in it." He, no doubt, expected violent opposition, and the *offer* to go into the fire confounded him. He looked at her awhile, and then said, "Well, you are a fool," and walked off; and there the affair ended.

During the first revival in Penn's Neck, under the preaching of Benj. Abbott, a female slave, by the name of Phillis, was converted. She belonged to a wealthy lady of the place, Mrs. Miles: and the lady, displeased with her conversion, made the service of her black slave harder than ever, "because she had become a Methodist." But Phillis was faithful, and used to go to the barn to pray. At one time her mistress took the cowhide, and went to the barn after her servant. Hearing a noise, she paused; and, listening, distinctly heard the slave praying to the Lord, and supplicating for mercy for her hard-hearted mistress. Conviction seized the lady's heart; and she exclaimed, "Can it be possible that my slave thinks more of me and my soul's

salvation than I do myself!" She returned to the house, leaving poor Phillis at prayer; and, retiring to her chamber, fell upon her knees and prayed aloud for mercy. Phillis heard the cry when she came in, and in a short time the Lord converted the lady. The overjoyed slave ran off to Mrs. Casper, and told her. She came over, and found Mrs. Miles happy in God, praising him for what he had done in answer to the prayers of poor Phillis. At the death of Mrs. Miles, she left Phillis a house, and a lot of four acres of land, which, with her *freedom*, enabled her to live comfortably during her life. She continued faithful, died happy, and is, no doubt, in the kingdom of heaven with her mistress.

Lower Penn's Neck has been favoured with several great revivals of religion, and it is about thirty-eight years ago since the first church was built. In a few years that was too small, and a second house, with galleries, was erected. In 1842, under the labours of the late father Stewart, of precious memory, a work of grace was so extensive, and so many were added to the church, that it became necessary to build a third time. About sixty souls were converted; and soon after, the present large church, with basement, lecture-room, class-rooms, &c., was

erected; although it is feared the latter house will not have as great glory as the former, inasmuch as too many have declined in spirituality, and turn aside from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But the Lord is all-sufficient to accomplish his great work.

CHAPTER VI.

And what thou seest, write in a book.—REVELATION

AT the head of the local ministry of Salem County, and, indeed, of the lower counties of West Jersey, we may place the name of Rev. James Newell, a man whose labours in the ministerial office, and liberality commensurate with his wealth, entitle him, in connexion with his admitted abilities as a preacher, to the respect of the church, and honourable mention, at least, in the annals of Methodism of West Jersey. His fellow-labourers, from the earliest period, were men of whom it is perfectly safe to speak in praise, whether they are living or dead; and the assistance which has been cheerfully rendered to the travelling preachers by those men of God, gives them, or their memory, strong claims upon the gratitude, at least, of the itinerants who have laboured in bygone years

in that part of the vineyard. Among them were such men as old father Boque, whose house and barn, and purse and heart, were all open to the preachers whom the Lord sent to travel and suffer in those days, which truly tried as by fire the piety of the itinerant.

The venerable John Hatton laboured much: also William Biddle, Joseph Jaquett, Moses Crane, Thomas Fox, William Mulford, Samuel Gilmore, and many others, who toiled to build up Zion for years, and whose works praise them even in the gates of the Zion of Methodism—and they were fitted for their calling. Religious experience and divine authority furnish the preacher for his work. The word of God is, of course, his text-book; and with the consciousness that God has called him to the work, a thorough knowledge of the blessed Bible, and heart experience, he can, if of a ready utterance, go forth in his Master's name.

The experience of a local minister is contained in the following short sketch, which we take pleasure in presenting in this place, and in the sound words of the individual himself, a man of God, and public fellow-labourer in the Lord's vineyard for more than thirty years. This narrative is inserted to show that the Lord's dealings with men, whom he has called

into the work of the ministry, whether itinerant or local, are precisely the same. In America, as well as in England, the two classes of preachers should be recognized as "coworkers with God."

"At a very early period of my life, I can remember, my mother frequently took me into her room, and prayed and wept over me, and I became deeply concerned about my soul's salvation; so that, young as I was, I often went into secret places and tried to pray. After I became large enough to work in the field, frequently, when alone, I would fall upon my knees behind the plough, and would pray to God to have mercy upon me, a sinner. We were a large family at my father's, of men and boys, and they used to tease me, and call me, 'Jim the preacher,' 'Methodist,' &c. The preachers that came there would often catechise me, and convictions increased with my years. But the influence of ridicule so harassed me, that at length I gave up praying, and became wicked, and used even to swear very hard, when angry. I promised the Lord, that if he would spare my life, when I became older, got married, and was settled in life, I would serve him. I continued in this way until my twentieth year, when I married, and commenced the business

of life. But I did not keep my vow. I hardly went to Methodist meeting once a year, but used to go occasionally to the Episcopal Church at Swedesboro'; and I thought, if I ever were a Christian, I would be a Churchman. I was very ambitious to be rich, and would even make a bargain on the sabbath. Sometimes conscience checked me. I would promise the Lord, if he would bless me with property to live comfortably, I would then serve him; and in about three years I had almost everything I could desire or needed to make one happy: but I was not happy. My heart was hard, I could not give it to the Lord, and my sorrows increased. I then prayed to the Lord to send some judgment upon me—take away my property, or something that would humble and bring me to serve him. In 1808 my prayer was answered. I had removed to a farm near Wilmington, Delaware. While crossing the Delaware River, my brother was seized with a violent disease, and died with inflammation of the brain, after a few days' illness. I attended his remains to the grave with a sorrowful heart. This was the beginning of the answer to my prayer, as I thought I was the occasion of his death. I expected to be the next to die. But my cattle died: one slipped down when going to the

water, and died ; another lay down in the field and could not rise, but died where it lay : and so it went, until my property was going fast ; my losses were heavy indeed. My convictions increased, so that I began in earnest to seek the Lord, and after about five weeks, day and night praying and striving, my guilt seemed to subside ; but I could not say that I had religion. All through the period of my convictions for sin, I went to the Baptist Church in Wilmington. The Rev. Mr. Dodd was the pastor ; but I was a stranger, and knew no person to whom I could state my case. A hired man in my employ at that time had been a Methodist, and I concluded to talk to him on the subject of religion. I asked him if he ever had religion, and how a person could know when he had this blessing. It was the month of May, and the sun was shining clear and beautifully : he pointed upward, and asked, if I could know that the sun shone. Yes, for I looked upward until its brightness was almost blinding. ‘Well, I had religion, but lost it ; and as certainly as you know the sun shines, you can know when God pardons your sins.’ My reply was, ‘Then I have no religion.’ I resolved to double my diligence in religious duties ; to seclude myself from company, even that of my neighbours ; insomuch,

that one, a Presbyterian, told my hired man, I would go crazy. I sought the Lord with my whole heart, but could not pray, as I had before the change referred to, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ I now prayed for the evidence of my pardon and acceptance.

“One morning I was going to my work, like Elisha, the prophet of old, with three yoke of oxen. On reaching the field, I felt my mind exceedingly drawn to prayer; I directed the lad to take care of the team for a short time, and I went to a part of the ground where some large rocks rendered it a secluded place. Beside the rocks I poured out my soul into the ear of God, and besought him, for the sake of his blessed Son, if I had found grace in his sight, to give me the evidence thereof. The Lord answered my prayer, granted my desire, and shed abroad in my poor heart the knowledge of sins forgiven.

“I sat upon the side of the rock, and beheld, as it were, the glory of God! The passing clouds appeared to praise him; the trees of the forest praised him; the birds of the air sung his praise; and I joined the grand song of praise sung by all nature. We seemed to praise God together. Tears of joy and gratitude flowed thick and fast; yet I was not born in a shout: but I could say with the royal Psalmist, ‘The Lord hath

taken my feet out of the mire and clay, and put them upon a rock ; put a new song into my mouth, even praise to my God.' And now, while I am narrating this, the tears of love and gratitude fill my eyes, celestial fire warms my heart, for the knowledge of sins forgiven, and the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit given unto me ; and, after so many years, my cry is still, with Moses, O Lord, show me thy glory !

“I thought the warfare was over, the victory won ! Would to God I could have stayed in that holy place ! When I returned to the house, I told my wife I had found the pearl of great price, the pardon of all my sins, and *I knew it*. In a few days I felt that though I had been a great sinner, God had a work for me to do ; I must pray in the family. My wife opposed it. She said there was no need to make such a fuss about it, for in a few days I would be cursing and swearing again, she would warrant. Here was a cross : I was alone—my wife in opposition ; I was in a strait. Opening my mind to my hired man, before referred to, who was a backslider, he said if I would pray in the family, he would stay in and kneel down with me. This was some comfort, and I resolved on the next sabbath to read a chapter, and pray.

“When Sun lay morning came, I got the Bible. My wife seeing my intention, hurried breakfast, set the chairs to the table, and sat down and began to eat. What a morning was this to me ! I wanted no breakfast, and left the room ; for, though prevented thus from duty, it seemed that I had lied to the Lord, by not insisting upon having prayer.

“I left the house, went out into the field, knelt down by the fence, and prayed there. I besought the Lord to forgive me, and I would take up the cross on the next sabbath. The cloud dispersed from my mind. That week I fasted, prayed much, and watched with all carefulness ; and on the time coming, lest I should be hindered again, I arose and began to sing, with the Hymn-book in my hand. After singing a few verses, I could hardly stand ; I trembled from head to foot, fell upon my knees, and prayed. The Lord so blessed and filled my heart, that all fear vanished. I could have prayed in the presence of a thousand devils : and from that day until the present, I have taken up the cross, and confessed my Lord on all occasions.

“Not having yet joined any church, I concluded to unite with the Baptists ; and the only person I knew, who was a member of that body, was Mr. J. Harker, who had been very kind

to me. But I refused to join until I knew what their creed was, and so I requested to see their book of discipline, &c. But I never could get one; it was always lent to somebody. In the mean time I came over into Jersey to visit my father, and stated the case to him. The old gentleman admonished me to be careful, and stated some of the peculiar doctrines of the Baptist creed, such as predestination, final and unconditional perseverance, &c. Being thus put upon my guard, I resolved to join no church until I could know their doctrines, &c., and judge for myself. The Baptists pressed and persuaded me very hard to join them, but I excused myself. In the month of June I attended a camp meeting held in Jersey, near Pilesgrove. Rev. Joseph Totten was presiding elder. Rev. Jesse Lee, of celebrated memory, was also there. It was rumoured among my Jersey friends that I was about to join the Baptists. Just before that, Mr. Totten and a Rev. Mr. White, a Baptist preacher, of Philadelphia, had held a regular public debate upon the subject of "water baptism." Mr. Totten was violently opposed to the peculiarities of that denomination, and did all he could to open the eyes of the public, and prevent any person from being deceived in regard to their doctrines, &c. I had often seen

Mr. Totten at my father's house. On the campground he came to me and asked if I had ever read the Baptist Confession of Faith, and if I would read it if I had one. I told him I had never seen one, and would read it, if I could obtain it. He went into the preachers' tent, and brought me the book. I went to a convenient place, and never ceased till I read the work carefully through, and, as a consequence, I was no longer a Baptist.

"They believe that God foreordains whatever comes to pass—and, at least by inference, the whole catalogue of crimes—and then *damns* the soul of man for doing that which He ordained. And that unless a person is *immersed* he is not baptized; is no Christian, and is to be classed among heathen. None except the immersed are suffered to come to their sacramental table. Of course the rest of the Christian world is on the way to hell. This is so near an approach to blasphemy; its assumptions are so supremely arrogant and absurd; that it is wonderful that learned, experienced, and really pious persons, can remain in that denomination. But the doctrine of 'immersion,' was a cause of anxious thought with me for a time. I made it a matter of prayer; and the Lord gave me peace in believing that, as I had been baptized in infancy,

that was sufficient, as the ceremony of baptism in the Christian church succeeded and superseded the initiatory ceremony of circumcision in the Jewish church; and is nothing more than an outward sign of the spiritual inward grace wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit: for if immersion is necessary to salvation, then, as before said, the whole Christian world, except the Baptists, are lost; and the direct lie is given to the words of the apostle when he declares, that 'in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.' Since that time I have never been in any doubt about the Baptists, or baptism.

"The next sabbath after my return home, I sought and found the Methodist church in Wilmington. The Rev. Wm. Bishop was in the sacred desk. After the service I offered to join the church. There was an objection offered by an old man named Rodman. He did not state the difficulty; but said if we could retire for a few minutes it might be removed. The preacher advised me to go out of the house with Mr. Rodman, and I did so. The old man then said he did not like the language I had used toward him in a late settlement. I told him I could not take back one word. We re-entered the church, where he was constrained to state

the objection. The circumstances were simply these:—At the funeral of my brother, Mr. Rodman took my father and mother to the burial in his wagon. Some weeks after the funeral, he came to me, and said he had a demand against the family for taking my parents to the burial. We were in the field: I sent my hired man to the house for five dollars, the amount of his charge, and handed the money to Rodman, with this remark, ‘Now God judge between you and me, if this is religion.’ This way of a settlement he did not like; he could not have any fellowship with a man who would submit his business to such a tribunal for settlement. The preacher told Rodman he thought the Lord was a very proper judge and tribunal in the case, and submitted my application to the vote of the church, and I was unanimously received. From that time to the present I have not been arraigned before the church for any offence. In the presence of my God, I can say, ‘Neither have I wilfully or wickedly departed from the Lord.’

“My mother, from my youth, always advised me never to stop in the Christian course short of sanctification. Remembering this, and being convinced of the need of a deeper work of grace, I fasted for three days and nights.

But yet the blessing came not. I was tempted then to burn the Bible. God had not manifested himself as he had promised in that book ; and I thought that my experience was all a delusion. I picked up the Bible, to throw it into the fire ! I paused ; and the words, *This is my infirmity*, passed through my mind. I then went with the book into my room again, and read, reflected, and fell upon my knees before the Lord once more. Here, as in a moment, a great and glorious change took place : unbelief was gone, faith triumphed, and I seemed almost to reach the blessing so ardently desired. In another moment a feeling of the divine presence and glory broke in upon my soul ; a renovating power I never had known before : the glory of God seemed above, around, and within me. I seemed to talk with God. In the language of Beekman, ‘ I was surrounded with a divine light, and stood in a solemn kingdom of joy.’

“ For days, for months, Jesus, all the day long, was my joy and my song. Nothing interrupted the rest or peace of my soul. I had that grace which beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. I was dead to the world, had victory over the flesh and the devil, and was indeed alive to God : having no desire but the will of God, I had no desire for worldly plea-

sure or self-gratification. I had nothing I could call my own; and I felt that I was but the steward of God.

“ During this period I did not expend one dollar, without looking to the Lord for direction. My body, soul, and spirit, were rendered to God a living sacrifice; all fear of death was removed, and I desired to depart, and be with Christ. Yet, in all this, I could say and feel, Thy will be done. I had some severe trials; but nothing moved me from this blessed grace. I was as a wall, against which every ball of the enemy rebounded; every dart fell harmless at my feet. When my attention was called to any business matter, my heart returned to God, as the needle toward the pole. My wife was such a one as Solomon hath assigned to the happy man. But the carnal mind is enmity against God. I talked with her, and prayed for her; but all seemed unavailing. One day, after a severe trial on her account, I retired to my closet to pray, and there it was impressed upon my mind that she would be converted. At this time I kept a diary, in which, among other things, I inserted this impression. In a few days, she being in that room, took up and read this part of the writing. It had a most wonderful effect upon her; conviction, the most pungent, was produced

in her mind. I left her in the hands of God ; and in a short time, one night, even at midnight, she was born of God, and uttered her rejoicings with a loud voice, which awoke everybody about the house. Soon afterward we removed to New-Jersey, that is, in the year 1809, and joined by certificate at Pilesgrove meeting. Here I enjoyed some happy seasons : but my mingling with the world and its business, in my removal, considerably lessened my strength, as I had not the opportunity to be so often in secret with God ; yet his grace sustained me.

“ During that summer a camp meeting was held in Salem County, in Bower’s woods. Rev. Samuel Coate, among many other preachers, was there. He was the greatest preacher I ever saw or heard. One sermon he preached I shall never forget ; it was on the resurrection and the judgment, the appearance of the white throne, &c. He sounded the trumpet, and the trembling earth gave forth its unnumbered millions, while the ocean rolled its inmates to the shore ; death and hell gave up their victims, all taking their course toward, and standing before, the great white throne : all trembling to hear the fiat of God—the terrible judge. The grandeur, the sublimity, the eloquence, of this description of

the scene, can never be forgotten. All eyes were fastened upon him; streaming tears attested the depth of feeling; while he then threw open the portals of the mansions of bliss, and crowned the happy righteous with glory—gave them palms of victory, and harps of heavenly melody, with which they praised the Lord for redeeming love: then moving toward the front of the stand, the preacher began to drop the wicked into hell; and at last, with a mighty effort, plunged the whole of the condemned—death, hell, and all—into the abyss, the bottomless pit of eternal woe! Such an effect I never saw or heard before or since. Such screams and cries for mercy: such praying and shouting all over the vast assemblage of the camp-ground; from all classes—for all were affected. Many of the society of Friends were there; and many of the most wealthy and respectable inhabitants of the adjacent country. General Shinn and Samuel Dorr, Esq., who was a Presbyterian, declared they had heard that day the greatest display of sublime eloquence, attended with spiritual and divine power, they ever heard in their life. Charles Jones, a Quaker, became soundly converted, sprang upon a stump, and preached to the people. He told them he had been greatly deceived in thinking he had had religion; but

he never had until then. Himself and all his family became Methodists. The most respectable persons were down on the ground, rolling among the leaves, or prostrate among the seats ; and a general surrender to the Lord seemed to prevail throughout the encampment. An old Friend, whom I stood near during the sermon, wept abundantly. At the close, he turned to me, and said, ‘Thee has some great speakers in thy society ; I never heard the like before.’ This was a great day for Methodism. It took a position in Salem County, and adjoining counties, never occupied before ; a place not merely among the poor and illiterate, but the educated and influential. How many were added to the church, I cannot say ; but numbers were converted on that ground. However, the sermon of brother Coate came near proving fatal to me. I had been trying to preach for some time ; but after hearing that sermon, I was brought to the conclusion that I had been deceived—that I could not preach, and so would never try again ; for if such a preacher could not convert the world, why it was no use for me to try. As a consequence, I lost my religious enjoyments, became subject to doubts or fears, and would probably have lost all, but for an old saint of God, the venerable John Murphy, who was a man

of great age and experience. He came to see me, and told me all that was in my heart, concluding, by warning me, if I did not improve my talent, the Lord would take it away—I should lose my soul. This alarmed me. He prevailed on me to promise to improve my time; and my public duties were resumed, the Lord restoring to me the comforts of his Holy Spirit. I was licensed to preach in 1810; and in 1822 was ordained by Bishop Roberts, in Philadelphia. I have been generally engaged on the sabbath ever since; riding from five to fifteen and twenty miles, and preaching once, twice, or even three times, every sabbath-day, besides attending funerals and extra meetings. I have been much exercised in mind relative to offering myself for the service of the church in the itinerant work, but I have satisfied myself, by covenanting with the Lord to do all I could for the support of the preachers and cause of the church: for my increasing family could not but hinder a man placed as I was; so the matter was settled. In the year 1812 I supplied Cumberland Circuit for some time, in place of brother William Smith. In the year 1831, when brother Burroughs and the lamented William H. Stephens travelled Salem Circuit, the increase was about six hundred souls. I

rode the circuit for that year with them—one of the happiest of my life.”

At the close of the year, Swedesboro’ Circuit was set off, when great success attended the labours of the brethren. It was there brother Stephens failed, and the generosity of brother R. Sutton was so nobly displayed, by labouring in the place of the sick preacher for the greater part of the time, and devoting the whole pecuniary allowance to brother Stephens and family.

The stewards of the circuit, and the people, received with open arms the labours of this excellent local brother; and in places where he had preached once a month, on the sabbath, for thirteen or more years, he was welcomed as the “travelling preacher” this year, with perfect cordiality—the most emphatic evidence of his commanding talents and extensive personal influence. The preachers all laboured together with perfect harmony. Many persons testified that brother J. N. was the means of the conversion of their souls. An old Quaker gentleman, much opposed to “hireling preachers,” was induced to hear him, and became soundly converted; a Presbyterian lady was awakened and converted under his ministry, under peculiar circumstances; and

a venerable Episcopalian, of Clarksboro', in his last days, was brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. During that year scores could testify to the brother's instrumentality in their conversion :—a full proof that the Lord made use of him, and honoured his faithful servant in his work, as a local preacher. Eternity alone can disclose the amount of good effected by his public ministry, and his liberality to the itinerants. His house has been a regular “preachers' home” for forty years, perhaps ; and he has given largely to erect churches, parsonages, &c. The experience and labours of local ministers could be collected to fill volumes ; but we have gathered this fragment, in order to show, that the same spirit, call, and success, belong to the local as to the itinerant minister, and that both, in the economy of Methodism, are but parts of a grand whole.

CHAPTER VII.

Then shall the fir-tree appear instead of the thorn, and the myrtle instead of the brier.—BIBLE.

THE year 1789 is rendered remarkable by the use of the term presiding elder, which had not been used previously. James O. Cromwell is recorded in the Minutes as presiding elder of New-Jersey, for the year. The old people, who remember his quarterly visitations in this region, say that he was a devout man and a powerful preacher. James O. and Joseph Cromwell were brothers, both laborious, excellent, and useful men. The term "presiding elder" was not adopted again in the Minutes for several years; as in 1794, Rev. John Merrick is named as "elder" on Jersey District. He was a man much loved where known; many families, as a testimony of respect and affection, named children after him. In those days, the more popular a preacher became, the more did his name multiply throughout the range of his travels.

In the year 1796, John M'Claskey was elder of Jersey District; and R. M'Coy and P. Vannest were on Salem Circuit. As biographical sketches of the worthies of those bygone days are not out of the order of this work, it may be grati-

fyng to give, in this place, some additional information relative to the Rev. John M'Claskey, the friend of Patrick Field, of whose conversion mention has already been made. John M'Claskey was a native of Ireland, and came to America when a youth of perhaps sixteen years of age. He finally settled in Salem County, N. J., where, in the year 1780, he married into the respectable family of the Firths. He was rather a wild young man, much addicted to the common vices of the period; as his friend Field testified, he had "drank, gambled, &c., with him, and now he would go and hear him preach." When the Methodist preachers first entered his neighbourhood, attracted by curiosity, he went to hear them, and finally became seriously concerned for his salvation. After a painful seeking, he obtained the grace of Christ: and the warm-hearted Irishman began almost immediately to warn sinners to repent and be converted; in which work he continued, with considerable success, until, being brought to the notice of the elder, in 1785 he was sent out to travel, under his direction, and in 1786 was admitted to the connexion on trial, and sent into East Jersey Circuit. In 1787 he was admitted into full connexion, and sent to West Jersey, where he

laboured faithfully and happily, to the salvation of many souls. After filling various most important stations, at Baltimore, Philadelphia, &c., in 1798 he was appointed presiding elder of New-Jersey District, including the whole state, and a small part of New-York. According to the character given of this man of God in the Minutes, which is confirmed by the statement of living witnesses, John M'Claskey was a Christian of deep Scriptural experience. As a minister, he was sound in the faith and mighty in the Scriptures; systematic, zealous, and successful, in his pulpit efforts—which thousands have witnessed, in time and eternity. The latter part of his life was marked by much and severe affliction, in which his patience and confidence in God his Saviour shone forth to the close of his career, which took place at his residence in Maryland, after preaching his last sermon with unusual energy and pathos. His illness continued for nine days, during which he often expressed a desire to be with Christ: to depart from the body, and be present with the Lord. Repeatedly he sung these words,—

“ Surely thou wilt not long delay !

I hear his Spirit cry,

Arise, my love, make haste away,

Go, get thee up and die.”

He finally closed his eyes upon the scenes of earth, without a sigh or groan, in the peace of God, on the 2d of September, 1814.

In the year 1787, West Jersey was one vast circuit, travelled by Robert Cann, John M'Claskey, and John Milburn. Among the other appointments were Trenton Circuit, Rev. Ezekiel Casper and Nathaniel B. Mills; Elizabethtown, Rev. Robert Cloud and Thomas Morrell; and East Jersey, Simon Pile and C. Cook.

In 1797 the title "presiding elder" was resumed, and has been ever since continued. The district of Jersey then included Salem, Bethel, Burlington, Trenton, Freehold, Elizabethtown, Flanders; and Newburgh, Delaware, Herkimer, and Albany, in New-York: an extensive region of country to be occupied by twenty-four preachers and one presiding elder.

The Minutes for 1797 show that, out of thirty-nine preachers admitted to the itinerancy, three travelled in West Jersey—Richard Lyon, Daniel Higby, and the venerable Peter Van-nest, of Pemberton, N. J. This year the church on Bethel Circuit had to mourn the loss of a worthy minister, the Rev. John Ragan. His labours and sufferings on that circuit, together with his success in winning souls to Christ, cannot be forgotten, even at this day. We, our-

selves, have found some of his living children. How glorious, and ever growing in its fruits, is the work of a minister of the gospel! He, as an instrument, labours, and succeeds in bringing one soul to Jesus; that one, perchance, lives and labours so faithfully, that, even as a private Christian, he induces two to become converted; these two are the means of four being added to the church; and thus the work goes on, but not in this limited ratio. No! The sainted Ragan's children, and the spiritual children of the thousands of faithful men of God now dead to earth, but alive in heavenly glory, may look down, if it be possible, and see their children's children by thousands multiplied, and for all time so continuing to multiply.

This brings to mind an anecdote of an eccentric preacher, who, one day, invited a celebrated minister to officiate for him, and, in giving it out to the congregation, he observed, "Some of you will hear your grandfather preach to-night."

The people did not know what to make of this term, as applied to the expected minister. However, the time came, and the house was crowded; but some of the brethren requested their preacher to explain what he meant, before the strange brother commenced, as otherwise there might be prejudice in some minds.

“O well, that is easily explained; he is my spiritual father, and of course he is the spiritual grandfather of some of you, who say you are my spiritual children.”

During brother Ragan's stay upon Bethel Circuit, his labours were owned of the Lord. His colleague was Anthony Turck, a good preacher, but stern, unconciliating, and severe, in his preaching. Ragan, on the other hand, was all love, sweetness, kindness, and mildness, and crowds followed him from one appointment to another on the circuit. At one period, when the awakening power of grace was mightily exerted at a private house not far from the present “old Bethel” church, about ten or a dozen young men followed Mr. Ragan to the house where he dined. They, timid, afflicted, bashful, were afraid to go in and speak to him; and most unwilling to go home without “something more,” to use the phrase of our informant. The weather was warm, and as the family sat down to dinner the front door was opened, and Ragan beheld the crowd of young people. He stopped eating, and inquired what they sought. None could answer. He arose, went out to them, and seeing the tears on many faces, and the solemn countenances of all, invited them to come in. The table was set aside, and there was no more

dinner eaten for many hours. These hours were devoted to exhortation, prayer, and praise. And the result was, that many of these young persons were then, and there, truly converted to God. Blessed man of God! he went to the city of Philadelphia, where the "yellow fever" then prevailed, took that fearful disease, and died in the early days of September, 1797.

Mr. Ragan travelled about eight years: he died, when he was in his prime, at about forty years of age. He was an elder in the church, a man of extensive reading, and could use the stores of a retentive memory in preaching to illustrate and enforce the truths of the gospel. He was an affectionate, mild, persuasive preacher; a precious "son of consolation" to many afflicted hearts, with whom he could sincerely sympathize. Many, very many, from this region, will rise up to call him blessed in the great day.

In the year 1799, Rev. Freeborn Garrettson was presiding elder of New-Jersey District, which then extended from Newburgh, New-York, to Cape May, West Jersey. The elder was a man of deep piety, great zeal, and much suffering, as his "Memoirs" will prove. On this immense district he presided with dignity, firmness, and impartiality, in the various quarterly

conferences ; and as a preacher, was acceptable, exemplary, and useful. On Bethel Circuit rode Zenas Conger and Levin Moore, devout ministers of God, whose memory is precious with many ; and on Salem, Richard Swain and Wesley Budd. Mr. Budd was denominated a “ masterly preacher.” a man of a cultivated mind, quick discernment, and an extensive knowledge of human nature ; but, most unhappily for himself and the church, he afterward made a shipwreck of his character, happiness, and hope.

How often are we called to lament the fall of true mental greatness ! Men of talents, and more especially men of genius, even when subdued by grace, are liable to sin ; because more sensitive to outward impressions, and more exposed to be influenced by inward suggestions. Men of moderate acquirements, and less strong intellectual powers, are not so easily seduced by passion to listen to the language of the appetites, as the man of genius—the sanguine, poetical, or imaginative. Some of the most sensual, and otherwise wicked, men of ancient times, were not ignorant ; nay, they were the philosophers, the moralists, the teachers of the age and the people. The treasure of extraordinary abilities, possessed by a minister of the gospel, who is of sanguine temperament, should warn

him to be doubly on his guard. He is but flesh and blood; he is a mortal man: and while he standeth upon the high places of Zion, he may fall into sin, and be swept by the torrent of passion into the gulf of perdition.

Unhappily, some of the greatest men of genius that the world has produced, have been distinguished and degraded by their vices; and the church has suffered on account of the lapse of some of her once great and good men.

“ ’Twas thine own genius gave the fatal blow,
And help'd to plant the dart which laid thee low.
So the struck eagle, stretch'd upon the plain,
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,
View'd his own feather on the fatal dart,
And wing'd the shaft that quiver'd in his heart.”

It is indeed painful to feel and know that the best gifts of our heavenly Father, the loftiest energies of our nature, may become “a snare and a curse,” unless we constantly watch, pray, and “walk humbly with God”—never daring or presuming, as ministers, to walk without Him who is the staff and stay of the soul.

Ministers of the gospel may become so absorbed in the work of cultivating the Lord's vineyard, as to perform that blessed duty effectually and successfully, but at the same time neglect to cultivate their own vineyard; or, in

other words, neglect their own souls, while busied in efforts for the conversion of those of others.

This is one secret of ministerial ruin! And it is of the Lord's grace, and speaks volumes of eulogy upon the Methodist ministry, that from the beginning, or founding of the church in America, so few have betrayed their holy trust, or fallen from the walls of Jerusalem, to become the taunt and scorn of the ungodly.

What was the state of morals in those days? In West Jersey, and almost everywhere, the recent Revolution, and the spirit of the war, had left their traces. Disregard to the laws of God and man prevailed, but especially the former; for wheresoever the armies had penetrated in their course, the impression was strong, to live while you can; eat, drink, and be merry; fear nothing—neither life and its cares, nor death and its terrors. The dance, the song, and the jest, were all the custom; and when the disbanded soldiers spread over the land, they carried with them, as a general thing, the pernicious customs or evil habits acquired during the war. Certainly there were exceptions to this rule. But the accredited historians unite in the statement, that during the seven years' struggle for independence, churches were vacated, religion decayed,

and its duties were postponed for a more convenient season. It is then but fair to presume that the morals of the people generally were not of the purest order.

The warning of Jesus to his disciples was applicable to Methodist preachers, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves." And truly, if it had been in the power of some, they would have devoured the preachers. Persecution, slander, and abuse, prevailed; and if not opposed with violence in every place where they went to preach the gospel, they had to contend with the licentious or reckless habits of the people: and so strong were the spirits of evil, that the inhabitants of a village would far rather prefer to "go to a dance" at night, than to hear one of those "wolves in sheep's clothing," as they were commonly called, preach the gospel of salvation.

And were not these men of God tempted? Yea, verily; for if one, two, or even three, of a family became subjects of grace, others in the same house, where the minister tarried for the night, were wicked, and would feel it a glorious triumph if they could in any way overcome the preacher. A minister of the gospel among the Methodists is never without his peculiar trials; yet, in some places, and at some periods of the

history of the church, those temptations have been greatly increased: as though Satan was actually loosed, and had come down to the earth, to torment the dwellers therein, for a season.

CHAPTER VIII.

And many people shall say, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.—BIBLE.

It is difficult to determine exactly when the Methodist preachers first entered the county of Cape May. The first record found of the circuit, dates in the year 1802. Richard Swain was the only preacher; and laboured in that region with considerable success, extending his efforts from the border of Cumberland County, to the "Island," or extreme lower point of land.

In 1803 Rev. Thomas Ware was the presiding elder of the district, and David Dunham the preacher. The first record of proceedings now to be found, relates to the erection of the venerable church at Dennisville. This building was to be a free church for all denominations; and as the Methodists were the most numerous, liberal, and active, they had the first right to the use of the house, and at any other time it

could be occupied by the Baptists and Presbyterians. But this partnership was found too much like some other unions, not resulting in a cordial agreement either of feeling or action. The venerable John Goff, a local preacher, whose memory is still cherished by the aged Christians of Cape May, was solicited to preach the dedicatory sermon ; with which he complied in his usual, simple, pathetic, and energetic style, to the edification of the crowd assembled on the occasion. The church was too small to contain the number of people who then came together, and so great was the effect produced, that it was the beginning of good days for Methodism in that region of the country. Among the members of the first class, perhaps, ever formed in Cape May County, was John Townsend, jun., afterward an eminently useful preacher ; a man wholly devoted to God, who obtained and retained the grace which saves from all sin. He lived a burning and shining light for many years, and ultimately removed to the western country. The members of the class were J. Townsend, jun., and wife, Nathan Cresse and wife, J. Sayre and wife, R. Woodruff, Sarah Wintzell, and David Hildreth ; the last named was also a local preacher, useful and faithful in his generation. Most of the

society and congregation came from the "sea-side," (where, long afterward, the Methodist Episcopal Church called Asbury was built, and became crowded with converts,) and from old Goshen, a village on the road to the Island, and even from the "Court House" Village; so that Dennisville church was soon fully supplied with a congregation of regular hearers, and the society increased rapidly.

The ancient grave-yard in the rear of Dennisville church still presents many venerable monuments of deep interest, as recording the names and virtues of those who were associated with the rise and spread of Methodism in Cape May County. Judge S., of Dennisville, was for a long series of years a class-leader and zealous supporter of the church in that region; his house was the comfortable home of the weary itinerant; his excellent wife, and amiable daughters, vied with each other in efforts to prove the genuineness of the hospitality for which the family were well known. The L. family, of Dennisville, were kind friends to the preachers; several members of the family were converted, and joined the church.

Goshen, the next "appointment," now exhibits a large handsome church; and the Court House has a church and parsonage, for which

the society was largely indebted to the liberal family of the Ludlams of that place. Two of them were members in high standing in the Baptist Church, but subsequently were brought into the Methodist Episcopal Church, mainly by the instrumentality of the Rev. C. Pitman, when presiding elder on that district.

In the year 1804, Rev. Caleb Morris, a distinguished preacher, was sent to Cape May. The second church erected on this circuit was the Tabernacle, situated in Lower Township. There were but few members of the society in that neighbourhood; only eighty-five whites, and five coloured, are returned in the Minutes for 1804, on the circuit—as the Presbyterians, at an early date, had a large church at Cold Spring, about a mile from the site of the Tabernacle, and the principal inhabitants professing religion were either Presbyterians or Baptists. The principal person in this, and indeed every requisite good work connected with the origin and prosperity of Methodism, was the venerable J. T., a judge of the court, often a member of the state legislature, and a useful local preacher; well known, and as universally esteemed, in Cape May. The remarkable family to which he belonged has produced quite an array of preachers, local and travelling,

all evincing the characteristics of the family—deep piety, fervent zeal, untiring industry, and sound sense.

In 1807 Rev. Joseph Totten was presiding elder; and Cape May was merged in Cumberland Circuit, on which Rev. D. Bartine and Joseph Stevens were the preachers. Of their success many evidences still remain.

The next year, (1808,) Cumberland Circuit, including Cape May, returned seven hundred members, showing a decided increase. Mr. Totten presided on the Jersey District for four years, and was greatly respected and truly beloved, both by the preachers and members. He also exerted an extensive influence among the people of the world. The savour of his precious labours yet remains in West Jersey. He was a man of deep experience, and as a preacher he boldly declared the truth of God. The face of clay could not affright him; saint and sinner received their portion from him, without favour or partiality; and the Lord abundantly owned his work. St. John-street charge, Philadelphia, in 1818, was his last appointment. On returning to his family, then on Staten Island, he preached on sabbath, May 10th, at Westfield. After the service, walking into the grave-yard with his wife, he pointed to a spot, saying,

“There I wish to be buried ;” as if he had a presentiment that he would soon tenant the tomb ! On the 15th he left the Island, reached his charge, preached three times on Sunday, and again on Tuesday evening ; then retired to bed in unusual health, and early the next morning he was taken ill. Some relief was obtained, and he went out into the yard, and in a few minutes the barking of a dog induced a woman to look after him, and she discovered him lying upon the ground in the garden. He was carried into the house, and expired in a few minutes. But no apprehension can be felt, or doubts entertained, of the safety of one who lived in the grace of Christ, preaching as he preached. He was a man of God, and “he was not, for God took him.” Blessed are all those found waiting for the coming of their Lord, whether in the morning or at midnight.

On Cumberland Circuit proper, as it stood for a number of years, the principal appointments were Millville, Bridgeton, Port Elizabeth, &c. Millville is a large village on Maurice River, famous for its oysters, its pine wood, and manufactories of glass, iron, &c. The Methodist preachers held forth in an old school-house for some years ; until the enterprise of one individual prompted and obtained means for the

purchase of a large stone house, unfinished, which stood on the edge of the village, near the main stage-road to Port Elizabeth. Subscriptions and materials were soon forthcoming, and the house was fitted up for a church, and dedicated to the worship of God. The brethren who were so active in this work lived to see hundreds of souls converted in that society. Brother S. F., and a zealous local preacher, Rev. J. S., with many others, whose names are in the book of life, we trust, were conspicuous in this blessed activity. Within the last few years a new and elegant church of suitable large proportions has been erected, and the zeal of the Millville Methodists still carries them forward in the work of the Lord.

CHAPTER IX.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.—BIBLE.

AMONG the faithful ministers who aided in planting Methodism in West Jersey, stands prominent the Rev. Richard Swain, a name remembered affectionately by the people who yet survive, with whom he laboured and suffered. He was born in New-Jersey, and in that

state he toiled in the work of an efficient minister, the greater part of his time in the itinerancy. He was received into the connexion in 1789, about the same time with many of the ancient worthies of the church, namely, the Rev. William M'Lenahan, Daniel Fidler, James Campbell, S. Hutchinson, B. Abbott, and others, whose efforts were so signally owned of the Lord, in the first diffusion of gospel grace and truth throughout West Jersey. Not much is known of his early life. It is stated in the memoir of his life, in the General Minutes of the year 1808, that he "possessed quick and solid parts," and that "he was pleasant, and sometimes used innocent strokes of wit, both in preaching and conversation." In the last years of his life he endured great affliction, lingering, indeed, for about five years, in which time the church was often deprived entirely of his services. No charge was ever brought against his character or conduct, in Conference; he was a blameless and useful man, whom his brethren highly esteemed. The appointments he filled show the extent of his travels and labours. One part of his Christian life was passed in doing the Lord's work; the other part in suffering the Lord's will. By reason of his usefulness in the work of the ministry, he deserved well of his

brethren. "He travelled in the extreme parts of the work before things were made ready to his hand," as is the case at the present day ; for he was one of the pioneers of the army of Methodist ministers that now go forth into fields prepared for them by those venerated fathers, who bore the burden in the heat of the day, and now sleep in the grave. "We trust he was made perfect through suffering, and triumphant in death. And possibly it requires more faith and fortitude to wear out in a confirmed affliction and state of dependence, than to go through the most extreme labours and sufferings in the field of action. It must be exceedingly painful for a person accustomed to extensive travelling to be bound and fettered by affliction, and in a great degree cut off from the service of God, his worship, and all Christian fellowship, not only as a minister, but as a member of society," as was the case with brother Swain ; who was thus tried as in the furnace of affliction, which is sometimes the lot of the meekest and best of God's children. He was appointed, during his active life, to the following fields of ministerial labour :—In 1789, his first year, to Trenton Circuit ; in 1790–91, to Flanders ; in 1792, to Middletown, Connecticut ; in 1793, to New-London. In 1794 he was sent back to Jersey, on Salem

Circuit; in 1795, to Burlington; and in 1802, to Freehold and Cape May; then again on Salem Circuit; when his health failing, in the following years, 1804 to 1808, he remained supernumerary. He resided at the house of his brother, Nathan Swain, in Jersey, and there he died, "in confident peace, triumphant faith, and the smiles of a present God, on the 12th of January, 1808."

Thus, even these ancient men of iron constitution were cut down by death, and passed away from the ranks of the itinerancy. However, the affairs of the itinerancy may be fitly compared to those of a large, well-trained army, when one falls, another is ready to fill up the place—the ranks are supplied, and the whole army still moves forward. The tears of the living brethren may water the memory of the fallen, but they that live must go on in the great work; and after all they suffer and do, as itinerants, for perhaps the best days of their life—devoting thirty or more years, not in working to make and save money, but growing actually embarrassed, by reason of increasing family, and its concomitant expensiveness; yet working on, even until stopped by disease or death—yet of those very men, some, even in the church, will utter complaints.

There is a difference between the printed Minutes and the Memoir of that excellent minister and devout man of God, Rev. William Mills, respecting the exact years he travelled Salem Circuit. But it is certain he preached in this part of the country for two, if not four years, with great acceptance; and it is proper to mention his name among those who did good service in this part of West Jersey. His short history, as here given, is gathered from the Minutes, and from the recollections of those among whom he lived and laboured. He was a native-born Jerseyman, of Quaker descent. The fire of patriotic feeling induced him, Quaker as he was, in 1776, to enter the American army, in which he became an officer. He was taken prisoner by the British, and was sent, after being changed from one vessel to another, to the West Indies. At length he was carried to Europe, from whence, at the close of the war, he returned home, and settled again in New-Jersey. About the year 1792, the Methodist preachers came into the region of country where he resided. His wife solicited him to hear them, but he resisted; stating his belief that he had been so wicked, his day of grace was past. By a remarkable dream, he was at length convinced that there was mercy for him. He

then attended the means of grace, until, as he sought the Lord with all his heart, he soon found mercy and peace, through faith in Jesus. He became a member of the first class formed in the vicinity of Shrewsbury, East Jersey. Soon after he found the Lord he began to exhort others, and was appointed class-leader ; and in the spring of 1799 he was received into the travelling connexion. His labours as an itinerant began on Milford Circuit, in Delaware, from whence he was sent to various places, and finally returned to Jersey. In 1813 he was sent to Freehold, the place of his nativity, and the first field of his Christian efforts. The soldier who had faced death at the cannon's mouth, on the land and on the sea, now, as his end approached in reality, felt no fear. He had a presentiment of his death, and told his wife that "death seemed to follow him everywhere." His zeal for God, and labours for the salvation of souls, increased. The last time he left his home, to continue his exertions on the circuit, he gave his wife sundry directions and advices, in case he should die. He started as well as usual, and filled all his appointments, preaching most fervently until a short time before his death. On the 4th of December he left Long Branch, met class, and then returned to

Mr. Lippincott's, at the Branch. On Sunday morning he went into a room in Mr. Lippincott's to prepare for the service in the church, which was to commence at half-past ten o'clock. The congregation was then collecting, and the family, thinking he stayed too long in the chamber, sent in to know the cause, and found him fallen in a fit of apoplexy, almost deprived of sense. After a time he revived a little, and on being asked if they should send for medical aid, he replied, "The Lord is the best physician." At about twelve o'clock the stupor and other unfavourable symptoms returned : he lingered until about six the next morning, and then peacefully departed for the world of rest. Thus suddenly fell into the arms of death another faithful minister of the gospel ; a zealous, faithful, and acceptable preacher ; an Israelite, indeed, in whom was no guile : long, however, has he lived in the affectionate remembrance of the people of West Jersey, who knew him well.

CHAPTER X.

I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope.—PROPHET.

How remarkably has Providence wrought in the introduction of Methodism into some places. First, if the location of the preaching places is considered ; next, the instruments used in the rise and progress of the work ; and, last, the material of which the church was constituted. About fifty years since, on the verge of the present county of Camden, and partly, in fact, in Atlantic County, there was an immense tract of pine forest, the abode of bears, deer, foxes, and other wild animals. Thousands of acres of land, covered, for the most part, with large and lofty pines, were here in all the native wildness and gloomy grandeur of primeval days ; when the rightful lords of the soil roved abroad in undisturbed independence and unfettered freedom, before the cupidity of the white man dispossessed them of their native forests, and drove them from the home of their ancestors. To the honour of New-Jersey, however, it may be said, she obtained the land amicably from the poor Indian, and paid honourably the stipulated price : the last balance of which,

for "reserved rights," was cancelled a few years ago, to a deputy from the remnant of the last tribe which lingered longest on their beloved heritage.

On the main stage-road from that part of the seacoast called Great Egg Harbour (which is now included in Bargaintown Circuit) to Camden, many years ago, as before stated, a settlement was formed by the late W. C., Esq. For the purpose of turning those noble old trees of the pine forest into marketable lumber, a saw-mill was constructed upon the stream which passes through the entire tract of land, issuing from springs in some immense swamp, and losing itself eventually in the Mullica River. At a short distance from the mill-dam a log dwelling was erected upon a pleasant knoll overlooking the country around for several miles. This was the nucleus of the present village of Hammonton, situated about the centre of that large forest, and about seven miles from the ancient "Blue Anchor" tavern. In this remote spot, the enterprise, industry, and economy of the first settler, was crowned with success; he soon purchased the tract, enlarged the family residence, and that residence became the home of the Methodist preachers on their way to or from the Shore, and for those who travelled the

seacoast circuit in early days. About five or more miles from the settlement, in a westerly direction, there lay several farms, besides a sparse population, among whom the preachers had made some converts, and formed a class. On a preaching day, in which the greater part of the people met together, it was resolved to build a house, as a regular church and school-house, both which were loudly called for by the number and destitution of the inhabitants, and especially the children. There was needed also a receptacle for the dead—a grave-yard. Pious old G. P., well known in his day as an active member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, leader of the little class, and ex-officio preacher, as occasion served, agreed, with others, that if Mr. C. would give the land and lumber for the grave-yard and school-house church, they would undertake to keep the preachers in future. To this proposition Mr. C. assented: a day was appointed; the men of the whole neighbourhood gathered; a spot was selected, about a mile west of Hammonton; the ground was cleared, and the timber brought to the place: but at last Mr. C. was obliged to have the house built at his own expense chiefly; and it was done, furnished with benches, and the grave-lot enclosed. Many of the old preach-

ers will remember the little church in the wilderness, which has been the spiritual birth-place and devout banqueting-house of many precious souls, some of whom are in the far west, others in heaven. The bodies of the latter repose beneath the shade of those venerable forest trees that still shelter the old Hammonton School-house. Thus was Methodism introduced and perpetuated among the remote and simple-hearted dwellers of the Pines. The spot has resounded with the voice of many distinguished men of God in the ministry, who disdained not the humble fare, and plain manners, and rude accommodations of this people prepared for the Lord; who, when the day of preaching arrived, would leave their toil, and in their best dress assemble to hear the gospel, to pray, and to sing to the praise of God their Redeemer, until the old woods re-echoed the hallowed strains.

Hammonton glass-works was established near the site of the old saw-mill, and a village soon sprang up of many inhabitants. At one time quite a large class was held there; and the present proprietors, sons of the deceased Mr. C., have built a handsome little church on the main street of the village, at their own expense, which is at this time an appointment on Pleasant Mills Circuit. A few miles south-west of

Hammonton, now stands another instance of the progress of Methodism in the pines. Subsequently the same Mr. C. purchased a tract of three thousand acres of land, covered with pine and oak ; and amidst those lofty trees, many of which remain as ornaments, now appears the pleasant village of Winslow. The eldest son of the old gentleman began the glass-works, which is said to be, under its present proprietors, the largest establishment of the kind in the union. The Methodist preachers kept pace with these movements, and preached the gospel and organized classes, as a number of the inhabitants were Methodists. A small school-house was soon built in the cross street at the east end of the growing village, and the services were held there. Religion prospered ; and in a few years the company owning the works advised the erection of a church. A building large enough to contain the usual congregation was soon erected ; and on its completion there remained a debt of eight hundred dollars, which was removed by the liberality of the firm of Coffin, Hay, & Bowdle, who most generously cancelled the debt, and deeded the property to the Methodist Episcopal Church. It became an appointment on Pleasant Mills Circuit, and subsequently

a gracious revival took place ; more than fifty were added to the church in a few weeks, and Winslow became a station, with about one hundred and fifty members. Rev. A. Gilmore was the first preacher of the station. A flourishing sabbath school was connected with the church, and many of the elder scholars became the first fruits of the revival. A simple, yet interesting incident, occurred at the commencement of the first revival. The preacher having the charge at the time had laboured until some time in the month of October, of that conference year, without much apparent fruit. He was preaching on one sabbath night at an extra appointment ; and as he closed the discourse, being no doubt divinely moved, he exhorted any who were willing to seek the Lord *then*, to come to the altar at once, stepping down from the pulpit as he gave the invitation. The first that approached was a most amiable Sunday-school girl, perhaps ten or twelve years old, then another followed, and another, until five of the elder scholars were kneeling for prayer. The scene affected all hearts. Who could resist the thrilling influence ? That young person remains an ornament to her religious profession ; and the greater part of those of riper years, who came into the church about that

time, were faithful. Also several of the youth have since died happy, and gained the heavenly crown. Thus out of the wilderness and waste places of our land, the providence of God, blessing the labours of the Methodist itinerancy, made a little garden of the Lord, where fruits have appeared and remain to the glory of God; where flowers of grace have flourished, sending forth a fragrance most refreshing. Among the living examples of piety then raised up, was one worthy of all honour, the lady of A. K. H., Esq. She was chiefly instrumental in the erection of the church at Winslow, the support of the ministry, the fostering of the sabbath school, and indeed of every good work. This lady, in the midst of life and usefulness, soon followed her venerable father, Mr. C., to the dark tomb; but the memory of her kindness, liberality, and religious profession, yet liveth, and is cherished among the poor and pious of all that vicinity. She went about among them, literally doing good with her counsels and her wealth, as a wise steward, of the abundance which the Lord had bestowed upon herself and husband, himself not behind a single particle in noble liberality.

The allusion to simple facts cannot be construed into fulsome flattery; and these truths

are here presented, merely for the purpose of stimulating others to go on and do likewise.

The ancient Hammonton school-house and church having exhibited for some years all the signs of age and dilapidation, two of the sons of the late Mr. C. built a neat little church in the village, within reach of all the inhabitants. Methodism has had severe struggles for its existence in this place, as many of the glass workers are German Catholics, and opposed to the gospel, and all else that savours of real religion, except as it may proceed from the priest. Those that have been converted to God, and united to the Methodist Episcopal Church, are among the most zealous, liberal, and useful members, displaying, amidst great temptations, a praiseworthy fidelity.

Notwithstanding the changes made by death and other causes, the itinerants find a hearty welcome at both villages named, even to the present day.

CHAPTER XI.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them.—ISAIAH.

PERHAPS this declaration of the prophet has been verified in no part of West Jersey so completely as in the lower counties, or those parts termed the “Pines” and the “Shore.” In this romantic region we find a hamlet on the main stage-route, a cluster of neat and comfortable dwellings, a large glass-works, and a pretty little church, on the spot where once the dark forest alone reared its sombre trunks and cast its broad shadows. This village, called Columbia, stands to the north of Hammonton, and but a few miles off. One of the principal men in this place is a Methodist, and there is a large class and regular sabbath preaching. Indeed, could some of our older preachers, who travelled this field thirty or forty years ago—when there was naught but sand and pines, or a perfect wilderness existed—return and behold the change that has been wrought, they would exclaim, “The wilderness is glad for them”—the laborious ministers who have been instrumental in turning the waste into a garden of God. Now there are small towns, Methodist

churches, and a numerous membership, all through these remote regions. Thus doth the Lord work spiritual wonders still, based upon the enterprise, industry, and energy of man. So let it be : if the busy mart of the merchant, the noisy manufactory, or the shop of the skilful mechanic, can become an auxiliary to the church, the prosperity in temporal works will be blessed or sanctified by the union with spiritual. All the proprietors of the extensive iron and glass manufactories, &c., of West Jersey, are favourably disposed toward Methodism, having contributed liberally toward the support and extension of the Methodist system, in all its branches and particulars ; which should be mentioned to their honour and credit. They are fully aware of the advantage derived, even in a pecuniary sense, from having working people controlled by religious principles ; as sobriety, honesty, and fidelity, are far more profitable than their opposite vices. In early days, when Methodism was first introduced in the neighbourhood of Hammonton, the deer were so numerous, that they could often be seen from the doors of the village houses. The original proprietor of the property has often shot down with his gun the stately buck or burly bear, within a few hundred yards from the dwelling

of the family. Many a thrilling narrative of hunting scenes could be recounted, if the recital would not be considered too much of an episode in the annals of Methodism. The preachers of those days sometimes went out into the deep forest to bring down the deer, for the purpose of securing food for their own families. Old brother W., a Jerseyman by birth, was an expert hunter of beasts, as well as men, and this was all right. Many a rough hunter and woodsman possessed and carried with him constantly the gem of grace. Many a rough, rustic, cabin of logs, contained a family devoted to God, wherein, at stated intervals, all the members gathered round the family altar; and the social fireside, where the huge pine logs, rolled into the vast cavernlike fire-place, sent up a ruddy flame, augmented to a degree of almost fierce brilliancy, by the blaze of the pine knots gathered for the winter fire, and used instead of candles. In the neighbourhood of the before-named villages, there are several others of note, which may be mentioned. Perhaps the oldest grave-yard in this part of West Jersey, is that of Pleasant Mills. Ancient headstones are standing therein, dated one hundred and fifty years since. The church was erected on this spot by some of the very first preachers; but

by which of them, no record can be found. The present church edifice superseded a log church, more than fifty years ago. The very trees, the groves, and the scenery of the river Mullica, all have an ancient appearance. To the antiquary it is quite a pleasure to gaze upon those remains of a past age. And here are found yet the children's children of some of the early Methodists. This appointment has been sometimes included in Bargaintown Circuit or Tuckerton, and now is so far honoured, in its old age, as to give name to the circuit with which it is connected. Here some of the fathers in the ministry have held forth in by-gone days, and scores have been converted within the old walls of Pleasant Mills church. Not quite two miles distant is the old village of Batsto, where was an iron furnace long before the Revolution. Its large mansion-house is a good specimen of the aristocratic style of building a hundred years ago; and it has also many dwellings built of huge logs, now falling into decay, which were put up long ago, for the accommodation of the workmen of the furnace. Cannon were cast here for the army of Washington, and a military corps was formed by the workmen of the village. Here, also, the venerable Asbury, in passing over all parts of

the vineyard of the Lord, proclaimed the glorious doctrines of the gospel; and in the hospitable mansion of Mr. R. found a most cordial welcome. This family, even to the present third generation, are possessors of the immense estate originally possessed by their ancestor, and to this day they are hearty supporters of Methodism. Amidst this village congregation, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, all meet as upon one common platform: the wealthy owners, and their poorest workmen, unite sincerely in the worship of the great God.

Gloucester furnace is at present the property of J. R., Esq., a firm friend of Methodism and the ministry, whose ample mansion is ever open to receive and provide for the comfort of the preachers; and his large family, many of them members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, unite in the good work. His former lady, Mrs. R., was a zealous member, meeting in the class regularly, and with the elder daughter, aiding to promote the salvation of their people. The present Mrs. R. is also a sincere follower of the Lord, and delights to associate with and promote the welfare of the inhabitants of the village, whose preaching place has been for years the school-house, at the edge of the woods by which the small town is, in part, surrounded.

Here, on one portion of the sabbath, once in two weeks, the circuit preachers hold regular meetings; and many scores of souls have been converted to God in that old building. Scattered on the road toward the seacoast, like beacons upon a wide sea, are a number of smaller appointments, where preachers usually preach on week days; while the Sunday appointments are usually attended by local preachers, of whom there is a large body in West Jersey.

The glass-works at Waterford became a regular preaching place soon after its erection. J. P., Esq., and his family, gave good encouragement to the ministers, whom they cheerfully entertain even to the present time. Here, too, the ancient school-house has been superseded by a church edifice, chiefly through the liberality of the proprietors of the property, although the members of the church are not backward to contribute according their ability.

Passing the ancient Blue Anchor, the traveler emerges from the dense cedar swamp, and enters the very old village of Squankum; an Indian name, possessing at least more of quaintness than the present common cognomen of Williamstown. Here, for more than half a century, the society worshipped in a small awkwardly constructed edifice; which, in latter years,

let the wind and snow come in almost too freely for comfort. But the difficulty has been removed by the erection of a decent commodious house. In the ancient building great things have been seen, wonderful displays of the power of the gospel; and the souls brought to the Lord would count many, for old Squankum has been famous as a seat and stronghold of Methodism for years.

In the year 1811, Jersey was formed into two districts, namely, East and West Jersey; Rev. P. Vannest being presiding elder of the former, and Rev. Michael Coate, of the latter. Mr. Coate travelled his district for four consecutive years, obtaining a firm hold upon the affections and respect, and gaining the admiration of the people. But in the last year of his administering the responsible duties of his official station, it pleased the Lord to say unto his faithful servant, It is enough; come up higher. He was born in 1767, in Burlington County, New-Jersey. His parents were members of the society of Friends; but hearing the Methodist preachers, they became converts to the doctrine and usages of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and were the first family to receive and entertain the itinerants in that neighbourhood. Michael was deeply convicted soon after his celebrated brother

Samuel began to preach. His conviction issued in conversion, and on that occasion he exhorted those around him, and continued to speak in public from that time, which was in 1794. In the next year Michael was received into conference, and sent upon Columbia Circuit, state of New-York. He remained on the same field till 1796, and then went to Connecticut. In 1798 he was sent as a missionary to Canada, travelling Niagara Circuit. In 1799 he was stationed in New-York city. In 1804 he married, and in the years 1805-6, was stationed in Philadelphia; in 1807-8 in the city of Baltimore; and in 1809 to Philadelphia again. Such was his popularity as a preacher, that he was sent from one city to the other; and but for the fear of exciting unpleasant feelings in others, he would have been continued in this kind of appointment, so creditable to himself, and, no doubt, profitable to the spirituality of the churches. In 1810 he was sent to Burlington Circuit, West Jersey; and in 1811 commenced his admirable career as the presiding elder of this district. The record speaks in the highest terms of brother M. Coate, as a man possessed of a strong mind and sound judgment. As a Christian, he was devoted to God, serious, impressive, and sincere: and in his intercourse

with his brethren in the ministry and membership, nothing was more manifest than his character for meekness and humility. In the various and important stations which he filled in the church, he ever exhibited the same lowliness of mind ; no airs of self-importance appearing in any part of his deportment. As a minister, he was lively, zealous, and energetic, appearing always to feel a deep sense of the infinite value of immortal souls, which led him to use the utmost exertions to save them from the wrath to come. He was a most excellent experimental and practical preacher, and exceedingly useful ; and of him it may safely be said, his praise was in all the churches.

At the first quarterly meeting for Burlington Circuit, held in 1814, in the town, he preached on the sabbath, with great animation, to the edification and delight of the members of the church, and with effect and acceptance among the people generally. On this occasion he depicted in his usual glowing style the future and eternal glory of the righteous ; founding his discourse upon Rev. vii, 9 : “ Lo, a great multitude stood before the throne, with white robes, palms,” &c. Brother Coate seemed to have a prospect of the future glory opened to his view, and to feel, by anticipation, a measure of

the joys of the blissful state. But, alas! this was his last sermon! On the following day he was taken ill; and continued for about five weeks suffering severely, but patiently, all the will of God in his sickness. In the commencement of his illness he was severely tempted by conflicts with Satan—the great enemy of the greatest and the best of men—who thrust his darts fiercely at this wounded, dying soldier, of Christ. Under these painful exercises of mind, he requested that the twenty-third chapter of Job might be read in his hearing, it being admirably adapted to his own case. During the reading of this portion of Scripture the power of the Lord filled the place, and the soul of his servant was abundantly comforted. He observed to some of his friends, “It is easier to *do* the will of the Lord, while in health, than to *suffer* his will, in the time of sickness;” yet did he bear all things with the utmost cheerfulness, presenting an edifying example of a dying Christian. One night, shortly before his decease, during a storm of rain, thunder, and lightning; while the thunder pealed most awfully, and the vivid flashes of lightning streamed through the apartment; his soul was filled with rapturous joy: he shouted aloud the praise of God, declaring that the peals of thunder were more delightful to

him than strains of the most melodious music. From this time his soul was tranquil. He viewed the approach of death with the utmost composure; and with the apostle of old, brother Coate knew that he had fought a good fight, had kept the faith, had finished his course, and that henceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord stood ready to impart unto him. On the 1st day of August, 1814, this excellent man departed to the rest of the righteous in the world of glory.

CHAPTER XII.

And there shall be no more death.—REVELATION

THE early Methodists were generally soundly converted to God. Their lives of prayer, self-denial, and uprightness, proved the truth of this. The genuineness of the religion they possessed was more especially shown by the calmness or rapture with which death was met and passed.

“A death-bed’s a detector of the heart.”

Sister J., for many years the wife of a respectable class-leader and exhorter in C., was a remarkable instance of Christian patience under protracted and painful affliction, and of

holy calmness in the hour of departure. Consumption, that fell destroyer of thousands in our land, seized upon the supports of life, and gradually prostrated the bodily energies of this pious sister ; preventing her visiting the house of the Lord to hear the gospel and to participate in the privileges of the church. She was visited by the preachers and other friends, who were a great help to her ; and they were rejoiced and edified to witness the perfect composure with which she could contemplate the certain approaches of death.

On one occasion, while seated at the table with her pious husband, and the family, he, observing the ravages of disease, remarked that "death sometimes came very suddenly." She replied, "Do not think that death will affright me ; it has no terrors. Death will not triumph over me ; I shall die, to live again for ever." Her strength rapidly declined. On the night of her decease, all present thought at one time that she was gone ; but to their amazement she revived, and talked in most triumphant strains, disclosing the happy state of her mind. "I am so happy in Jesus," she whispered, when fainting nature forbade a louder tone. As a final token of victory, her hand was raised ; and, as a brother present engaged in prayer, the room

was filled with the divine presence and glory, filling many hearts with holy gladness, amidst natural grief. Like a person going on a journey, she inquired previously of her husband if anything had been forgotten in her first directions as to the family affairs; such was her complete composure, freedom from all fears, and victorious faith in the divine Jesus. As soon as she had made the last sign of triumph, her soul took flight to the regions where the inhabitants never say, I am sick.

This death occurred in the year 1814, when nearly all persons were agitated about the war then raging in this country, and which occasioned so many to talk away and lose the peaceful religion of the Prince of peace. The poor, especially, suffered greatly from want; labour or business being nearly suspended, and provisions and every necessary of life excessively expensive. Many were compelled to live upon corn meal and a few potatoes; meat was quite a rarity: often means could hardly be obtained to purchase even the quantity to keep off starvation. In their distress many sinned greatly, as though the troubles they endured formed an excuse for the neglect of religion and the forsaking of God. But the Lord did not forsake the people utterly. In that dark and

stormy period, his grace was made to shine gloriously in the suffering lives and fidelity of the living, and in the triumphant death of many saints.

During a gracious revival of religion in the town of C., among others who came to "see the noise," were also many of the Baptists. A brother of A. J., the husband of the deceased sister above noticed, came among his Baptist friends, to witness the work of God among the Methodists. Mr. J. was a rigid predestinarian and immersionist. He believed none were Christians but the immersed, and all the predestinated were safe. His Methodist brother took the opportunity to converse with him on the danger of believing that all things were fixed from all eternity, as it precluded all necessity for effort on the part of any man, either to gain salvation or avoid eternal ruin. Mr. J. called him a simpleton, for his attempts to inform or correct him. A request made to allow his wife to go to the altar and become converted, as she was painfully convicted for sin, and anxious on the subject of her soul's salvation—neither immersion nor predestination being able to impart peace to her mind—so enraged Mr. J., that he left the church immediately. As he was going out, the Methodist brother said,

"Well, I will pray for you, at all events."
"No, don't pray for me or any of mine; I don't want your prayers." The calm reply was,
"Yes, I must; the Lord has commanded me to pray for my enemies." Mr. J. left the house in a violent passion. He lived for several years after this, but kept out of the way of the Methodists. When he was taken sick, however, and alarmed at the prospect of death, he lamented that he had not lived more religiously, and sent the sum of fifteen dollars to his Methodist brother, toward paying the debt of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the town. His exertions at the last produced some ground of hope in his end. Ah! how many souls, believing the pernicious doctrines of predestination, presuming themselves elected of God as his children, and that they cannot be lost, live all their days without the knowledge of sins forgiven, and in the neglect of real religious duties. That doctrine, pushed to its logical consequences, is likely in some minds to produce such results. There have been persons, and perhaps may now be, without spiritual union with Christ, and destitute of the comforts of the Holy Spirit; who yet cleave, as with a death-grasp, to the hope that they cannot be lost, and shall most certainly enter into heaven. Dreadful delusion! to be

dispelled effectually by the first entrance of the soul into the eternal world, where all is reality.

West Jersey has sent forth many of her sons to proclaim the gospel of salvation. Among those embraced in the limits of our sketches, few were more highly esteemed while living, or died more sincerely lamented, than the Rev. Thomas Budd. He was born in February, 1783, in the romantic village of Pemberton, Burlington County, at that time a sparse settlement, consisting of a few small houses and the New-Mills, in the midst of a pine region. It was known by the name of New-Mills until a few years since, when it was rebaptized by the title of Pemberton. It is at present a borough and a station, and has been termed the Athens of West Jersey. The last term has been applied, from the fact, that many ministers, travelling, local, supernumerary, and superannuated, have resided in the village and vicinity; and that the inhabitants are remarkable for general intelligence. Perhaps, also, because the people are a little tinctured with that peculiarity which St. Paul attributes to the ancient Athenians, not idolatry, but "hearing and telling some new thing." A very commendable disposition truly, when it is displayed for the edification of the church,

the salvation of souls, and the glory of God. The religious zeal, hospitality, and liberality of the church in Pemberton, are well known to many of the living members of the ministry; and the names of its chief men well deserve to be written—such as the venerable father Campbell, whose liberal donations and final bequest freed the church from debt; that faithful servant of the church, Rev. P. Vannest, whose epistles in the Advocate and Journal have given an interest to his personal history, which deserves a more-extended exposition, for the encouragement of the present generation of Methodists; the laborious preacher, Rev. Daniel Fidler, now with the host of redeemed in the enjoyment of that rest for which he toiled and suffered so many years; and brothers A. and H., and scores of others, of whom time would fail at present to tell their worth, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life: with whom on earth the writer has taken sweet counsel, and whom he hopes to meet in the world of light and love eternal.

But to return to our notice of Rev. T. Budd. He was brought to God by converting grace in the year 1800, and immediately joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in his native village. His "grace, gifts, and usefulness," were soon seen

by his brethren; and he was recommended to the Philadelphia Annual Conference. In 1803 he was received as an itinerant preacher, and sent to Redstone Circuit. After travelling with increasing approbation and extensive usefulness in several of the "schools," (as Bishop Asbury termed the frontier or far-off circuits,) he was sent to Fell's Point, Baltimore, in 1807; to Burlington, N. J., in 1809; and in 1810 he was stationed in the city of Philadelphia, with Revs. T. F. Sargent, T. Burch, T. Bishop, and T. Everhard. In this important station a wide field presented for improvement of his own ministerial abilities, for extensive usefulness in the cause of God, and edification of the church. But it pleased the Lord to arrest the progress of his young servant, and consumption, which seemed constitutional, soon developed itself. The attack was sudden, and the disease advanced rapidly toward a fatal termination. The brief biography contained in the General Minutes of the period, states that he was a young man of good natural abilities and improved mind; useful and acceptable as a preacher, and deservedly esteemed in the stations he filled; of good moral character, and deeply pious in his life and conduct; open and free in his manners; a stranger to dissimulation; capable of warm at-

tachments and friendship; and candid, frank, and sincere in his general character.

During the first part of his illness his mind was much depressed by doubts of his acceptance with God, and a full preparation to meet death. This state of mind did not continue long; the Lord suddenly dispersed the cloud, and filled the soul of his servant with joy and peace in believing.

He was afterward frequently harassed with temptations; yet, at intervals, could rejoice in God, proclaiming that Jesus was precious to his soul, and exulting in the consolation he had derived from religion. A few hours before his death, when asked whether "he knew his end was approaching, and was ready to meet it;" he replied, that he "had no presentiment that death was very near, but if it were the Lord's will he would rather go at that time, unless he had the fullest assurance he should feel as happy and as fully prepared at some future time." And in this peaceful, resigned state, he breathed his last.

The day after his death his remains were taken to New-Mills, accompanied by a number of his friends, and interred within a short distance of the spot where he was born. One of his colleagues in the ministry preached a ser-

mon from 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8: "I have fought the good fight," &c., to a large and deeply affected congregation, in the old church in the village. A marble slab occupies a conspicuous place in the walls of the new church of the present Pemberton Borough, sacred to the memory of this departed minister of God.

Truly the motto of the present chapter is all that can redeem it from the charge of being gloomy, as a catalogue of the dead must be; but in that sentence from divine revelation, this cheering intelligence may be collected, that there is a world beyond the river of death, over which the righteous pass, and in that world there is no more death! Life is the lot of the spirits of the redeemed dwelling therein, with all that is implied of bliss and perpetuity, which can be associated in eternity with the terms, "no more death!" The history of Methodism cannot take notice of the private and individual actions, virtues, and sufferings, of those who are worthy, and ought to be remembered, except in the case of a few comparatively; and gleanings in the footsteps of history, such as are presented in these annals, may be profitable, even if they do sometimes excite painful emotions.

The church is deeply indebted to the excellent Dr. Bangs for his general history of Me-

thodism ; but local research will furnish farther details of individual and private worth. Incidents unrecorded in history may present valuable examples of religious heroism, in doing and suffering the will of the Lord. And this research will collect and preserve records of many events which contributed, in the aggregate, to make Methodism what it was—and, indeed, what it now is—a mighty and wonder-working machine ! The true or real mainspring of a great movement in the church may be an humble, obscure person, unknown beyond the bounds of his conference, or the private sphere in which he lives and moves. Methodist itinerants or preachers, as a body, care as little for human glory, or man's applause, as any set of men on earth. If souls are converted to God, added to the church, grow in grace, and the temporal affairs of the church or charge are even moderately prosperous, the servant of God goes forward in his work, often regardless who has the honour or glory, so far as human agents are concerned. It is said that “worth, like water, will find its level.” But obstructions may be cast into a stream, and divert or arrest its course ; and facts lead to the belief that modest talent may pass along for years, unknown and unrewarded, while men of tact may

succeed in pushing themselves forward, and attain to high places in the church, which real talent actually fails to reach. In no church in the world, perhaps, is there so large a field for the really meritorious to work their way to the most responsible offices, useful positions, and desirable honours. The field of enterprise and respectability presented in the Methodist Episcopal Church, is open to all ministers who prepare themselves properly, and are qualified, by the grace of God, for the duties the church enjoins. What a sublime, moral spectacle, is exhibited annually in each conference, where more than a hundred men submit their will, with respect to the place of their future labours, to the decision of the appointing power ! When the regular itinerant meets his brethren in the annual conference, it is to submit his character and conduct during the past year to be subjected to the closest scrutiny. To wait patiently until the whole business of the assembly terminates ; and then, and not until that last hour, does he know where he must go and preach the gospel during the current year. Has he no anxieties, no desires, no fears, relative to the field of his future labours ? Yes. But he has sur-rendered all these feelings, views, and wishes, to the wisdom, prudence, and piety of his bre-

thren who make the appointments ; he has confidence in those, and in the Lord of the vineyard. He has asked his divine Master to control the affairs of the conference, especially the final arrangements ; to send him where he may be useful, and his family comfortable : he asks not honour, wealth, or a life of indolent ease. No. He believes that his brethren will send him to the place, which, in their spiritual judgment, he should fill, and to that appointment he goes.

A scene presented at the door of the conference-room, will serve to explain these matters more fully to those uninitiated, yet desirous of knowledge, through an authentic history, or from a reliable source :—

A venerable white-headed veteran, whose name had been long on the list of the superannuated, met the writer, in whose admission into the conference, and success as a minister, the excellent father took great interest. “ Well, my lad,” he said, “ where are you to go this year ? ” “ Ah ! father V., I do not know ; I cannot get a word out of the elder : however, I shall go cheerfully wheresoever they please to send me.” “ That is right, my child. Do you cultivate that spirit : it will save you much trouble and pain, and the Lord will make your way.”

These words of encouragement, uttered many years ago, when they were addressed to one feeling himself, indeed, a lad, were never forgotten.

Fearless, self-sacrificing, and laborious, while God is with them—these ministers of his—whom should they fear? In the true spirit of the great Master, they go forth rejoicing that the Lord has honoured them with any place in his church, without stopping to quarrel about who has the best place.

.. Never, never, can the scene be forgotten, when, in the spring of 18—, for the first time I heard the appointments read to the Philadelphia Conference. The noble form of Bishop A. was in the pulpit of the Union Church, in that city. It was past midnight; the house was crowded in every part, the preliminary exercises were over, the bishop arose to deliver his parting address, and the silence of the grave, almost, pervaded the place. The speaker dwelt first upon the duties of the ministry; then approaching the main point of his speech, the arrangement of the appointments, he became sublimely eloquent. He asked the questions, ‘Whom have I grieved? whom have I offended? whom have I disappointed?’ These startling questions pealed over the immense assembly; then pausing a moment,

he replied, 'None, none, none ! who possess the spirit of their work : the mind of the divine Master.'

"The effect was overwhelming ! There was a move in that large body of ministers, as though, in that moment, a holy influence had come down from God and taken possession of every soul, and if a response had been proper, it would have been an echo of the bishop's words. 'None.' It was about two o'clock when this interesting scene closed : each one took his way, and with the early morning, went to the place of his duty."

This is the description given by a witness, and his own language is used in depicting the scene. Those men of God were known chiefly by their works ; and the Lord had chosen them to the one work, for which he gave them one spirit and one book. Painful and various were the preparatory exercises of mind through which they passed, before they were brought out into the ministerial field of labour and privation. Mr. Asbury often required the candidates for admission into the itinerancy to undergo a strict examination as to personal experience, knowledge of the Scriptures, and the doctrines and usages of the Methodist Episcopal Church, conducted by himself, in the pre-

sence of the conference, and to preach a trial sermon during the session of conference. This was a dreadful ordeal to a young man, taken, perhaps, from following the plough; but grace sustained those who were really called of God.

The trial sermon is dispensed with in the present day; and as the number of conferences increases, committees are appointed for the purpose of examining candidates.

CHAPTER XII.

Blessed are they that do his commandments.—BIBLE.

METHODISM has drawn out and presented to the church and the world some eccentric characters, both in the itinerant and local ranks. Religion does not always alter the native traits of mind, or do away with the features which may constitute the idiosyncrasy of an individual.

Influenced by grace, even those very curious and incomprehensible peculiarities may be rendered serviceable to the good cause. That which Rowland Hill termed the "slap-dash style of preaching," will sometimes accomplish by the storming process what a mild, polished, and systematic course, could not do. Among the local preachers of the West Jersey District,

about twenty or twenty-five years ago, was a licensed brother, familiarly called, even at that day, while in the prime of his life, “ Old Johnny Spencer ;” a man whose real piety and usefulness in his proper sphere merits a passing notice in these annals.

He was born and had grown to manhood among the early Methodists, and was brought into the church in his youth. In manners, language, dress, and appearance generally, indeed, in all things, he was an original. Brought up in the Pines, his education extended no farther than ability to read a familiar chapter in the Bible, and a few favourite hymns : yet Johnny’s gifts, grace, and usefulness, warranted the quarterly conference of Gloucester Circuit in giving him a license to exhort, in virtue of which he took the liberty to try to preach. His blameless life, burning zeal, and deep experience in the things of the Spirit of the Lord, fully sustained him ; and the objections of the brethren were silenced, when they saw Johnny Spencer attract a crowded house, and witnessed the effect of his sincere efforts—even though they were mingled with oddities. He would labour hard at his trade (shoemaking) all through the week, to provide for his little family ; but the sabbath was his day—the day of his beloved

Lord—in which he delighted to travel far and near to hold meeting. Early, a great while before day, on one sabbath in summer, Johnny was up and off. It was his habit to trudge along on foot for miles, without showing signs of weariness, or uttering a word of complaint, often singing as he went on; but if not, almost invariably talking to himself, or to the Lord, in prayer. On this occasion, he had travelled several miles, and about daylight, just as things began to be dimly visible, he espied a small house a short distance back from the main road. Yielding to an impression, he determined to go there and apply for breakfast, if the inhabitants were Methodists, as he would eat with no others. The man of the house had just risen, and when Johnny knocked he opened the door. The obscure light prevented the man perceiving who his visitor was exactly, and the first question completed his mental confusion. “Are you a Methodist?” “No.” “Then get your soul converted, or you will be damned!” Johnny turned almost as quick as a flash, and disappeared in the obscurity of the morning mist, going on his road with all speed. The man, left so suddenly, knew not what to make of this singular visitation; he was sure that he was awake, yet the affair seemed like a dream: he

became alarmed, awakened his wife and family, and his excited imagination at length persuaded him that it was a visitant from another world, sent to warn him. He could not rest ; so he betook himself to prayer and reading the Bible ; he sought for the nearest Methodist meeting, which was five miles off, and continued to meet with the people there, and never rested until the Lord pardoned his sins, and placed him among the children of his spiritual family : and with all his house, he continued through life to serve the Lord. Johnny Spencer went on his way until he came to the house of a Methodist, obtained his breakfast, prayed with the family, and then travelled on until he reached the point of his destination.

Several years after this occurrence there was a quarterly love-feast held in old Bethel, for Gloucester Circuit. During the service, the man referred to, now an established member of the church, related his experience. His awakening to a sense of his sinful and dangerous state, by the visit of an angel or a mortal, he could not tell which. He described the circumstance as it occurred, and concluded, by giving thanks to God that he had become a Christian, and was happy in the Lord. Johnny, who was seated in a corner of the church, started up as the

brother ended his speech, and exclaimed, with most inimitable oddity of look and tone, "That was me!" This declaration brought a smile to every countenance; and the whole story, as detailed, then came to be known.

On another occasion, accompanied by a friend, who related the incident, Mr. Spencer was on the way to a camp meeting, on a Saturday afternoon. The weather was very warm, he wanted water; and observing two women spinning in the doorway of a small house by the wayside, he approached, and very meekly asked for a drink of water, which was readily given. "Now, you have given me water, I would like to do something for you. Are you Methodists? are you converted to God?" The elder of the two women replied, "No, away with you; I want to hear nothing about your converting people." "Ah! but you must be converted, or you will go to hell." "Go away," said the woman, and both wheels spun round with increased velocity. He was not to be repulsed in that way. "Come, let us pray; I must pray for you before I can go." He dropped upon his knees, near the two, and his shrill, powerful voice, arose above the loud hum of the wheels. He had not prayed long, before the tears streamed from his eyes. He plead most earnestly with the

Lord to convict and convert the two women, and not let them fall into hell; becoming more vehement as he proceeded, until at last both wheels stopped, and the women fell on their knees, weeping violently, and crying for mercy most sincerely. The brother in company, at the close of the first prayer, joined with Mr. Spencer in singing a hymn, and then he knelt and prayed again. One believed, and was converted, under the second prayer; and before they left the house, both women were rejoicing in the grace of Christ. Mr. Spencer went along toward the camp, clapping his hands, and shouting the praises of the Lord; his more sedate friend following on in perfect astonishment. Any simile, however rude or homely, would serve Mr. Spencer for an illustration in his discourses from the pulpit. An effect was produced once in a crowded school-house where he held forth, that was not soon forgotten. Speaking of the necessity of being prepared to obey the summons of death, he drew a picture of a house "all in a litter," when the people began to laugh. "You may laugh, but you will soon cry," said he; and on he went, describing the human heart as the house all in disorder, "death coming in at the gate, and not even a dog to bark an alarm or give a note of warning.

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Death enters, the soul is conveyed forcibly into eternity, and flung down into hell." So ingeniously and powerfully did he apply the figure, that, before he closed, many wept on account of their lost state.

Thus, by the weak, foolish, and we may add crooked, things, as instruments, does the Lord often do a great work, confounding the wise and worldly minded. The truly pious rejoice when the Lord works, by whom he will ; and if the instrument should not be as highly polished as custom requires, they will not command it to cease working, while souls are brought from Satan to the true God,—

"It is not whim, nor Satan, moves the man,
But a true Spirit, which some fail to scan."

While in this desultory strain, the author begs liberty to insert here that which may be termed "A cure for the itinerant fever," which shall be given in the language of the narrator :—

"You know that those who have no experience in the nature of an itinerant preacher's life, labours, trials, and privations, think it is a fine thing to be a travelling preacher. They have seen one, perhaps, riding along in his sulkey on a sunshiny day, and lo! they desire to be as happy as the rider ; forgetting that the preacher is not always riding about, and that the sun does

not shine always. Sometimes a local brother gets the travelling fever, and he is very uneasy lest he should have mistaken his call, and omit a great work which he ought to do; of this I am not the judge, but will give you the facts in one case. Many years ago I travelled C. Circuit in West Jersey. There was residing upon the circuit a brother P., a most devotedly pious young man, and a local preacher of some few years' standing, generally liked as a speaker, and universally respected for his piety and good character. He resided upon a good farm of his own, where, with his small family, he could live very comfortably indeed, and make money too. But whenever I went there he could talk of little else than travelling to preach the gospel more fully. He was of rather feeble frame and delicate health; and I informed him it was my judgment, he never could stand constant labour in preaching, while he could make himself very useful in his present position. The Lord, I told him, did not require of men a work for which they were physically unfitted. All my reasoning would not satisfy him; so at last, during the winter, I requested him to meet me at a certain point, and take a tour of two weeks on his native circuit, and after that, he could tell, perhaps, whether travelling and preaching agreed with

his constitution or strength of body and mind. At the appointed time and place we met. For a week the appointments required two sermons a day, and on Sunday three sermons, besides meeting classes and other business matters; travelling for many miles through the woods and over rough roads on horseback, in weather severely cold, for a great part of the time. I kept him at work steadily, occasionally meeting the class myself; toward the end of the second week. I found he was becoming too feeble to go on much farther. One morning, as we started for the next daily task, heavy clouds hung over us, the wind howled among the forest trees, and snow began to fall quite thickly. Brother P. stopped his horse, and said, 'Had we not better put up somewhere? it will be a storm.' 'A storm,' I replied; 'we never stop for a small snow-storm.' Poor P. wrapped himself closer in his over-coat, and said no more, no doubt thinking of his wife, children, and pleasant fireside at home, while he was out exposed to the cold storm. That night finished the work of the circuit, for the time; we had finished the two weeks, and he was anxious to start for home, distant some forty miles. The family where we stayed at that night, were up at three o'clock to start for market; and brother P. entreated me to arise

and get breakfast, which was ready, and be travelling toward home. To please him, I did so. We were soon on the saddle; and in the clear moonlight of an intensely cold morning, we rode about twenty miles almost without a word of conversation, it being too cold to talk. As the sun arose we came in sight of my residence, but he had to travel twenty miles farther to reach his home. When we were about to part, he stopped his horse, and I said, 'Now P., what do you think of the itinerancy?' 'Ah! brother,' said he, 'it will not do for me; I cannot stand it. I had no idea of the toil and exposure, and the privation and sufferings.' 'Why, my dear brother P., you have been on the lightest work, and in the best part of the circuit; if this specimen discourage you, I do not know what you would say to other scenes.' 'Ah!' said he, 'I had better stay at home, and attend to my family and farm, and leave the itinerancy to those who are stronger than I am: this trial will satisfy me.' Poor P. went home, and had a spell of sickness of several weeks' duration; but he was cured of the travelling fever."

Perhaps a few more anecdotes from old Johnny Spencer's career, will not be unwelcome.

On a certain occasion he fixed his mind

upon a very poor man, his neighbour, and went to tell him that he must go to meeting, and get converted. The man objected he had no shoes to wear. "Will you go to meeting, and seek the Lord, if I make you a pair of shoes?" After some demur on the part of the man, the bargain was made. Mr. Spencer went to his house, and went to work; and prayed all the time he hammered the leather or sewed up the parts. Soon as the articles were finished, Johnny took them to the person, and they fitted nicely. "Now for your part of the bargain." "Yes, I will go to the meeting, and pray to the Lord to convert me." "Suppose we begin now." All in the room fell upon their knees, Johnny prayed, telling the Lord all about the compact, and the danger the man was in if not soon converted. The result of the prayer was, a keen conviction fastened upon the soul of the poor man. Both went to meeting, and the man required now no other stimulant to engage in the work, than the painful feelings which filled his heart of the need of a Saviour. He sought the Lord, and was speedily delivered from all his fears, and became a firm, consistent Christian, able to buy shoes for himself and family.

A specimen of Spencer's style of preaching

was given some twenty years ago, in the presence of the writer. At a certain church, after sermon, he was called upon to conclude the service. "I sometimes think," said Johnny, looking about in the crowd, as if he were searching for some one, "that some Methodists are just like my old barn bucket. Let it stand in the sun and wind, it gets weak, cracked, and leaky: I go to the well and fill the bucket with water to carry to my creatures in the barn, thinking I have a nice full bucket of water; but, behold, before I get to the door, the water has all leaked out. Just so with some Methodists; they come to meeting, seem to be filled with the grace of God, but on the way home they talk about any thing but religion, trifle, do not pray, and by the time they reach home the grace is all gone, like the water out of the bucket—they are leaky barn buckets."

The seeming homeliness or levity of the illustration was absorbed in the solemnity of the effect.

Mr Spencer paused a minute, then casting a keen glance around, he said, "You all know the worth of a bank-note when you have it; how careful you are to keep it from injuring in your pocket, or of losing it; and, above all, you are careful it shall not be stolen from you; nor will

you throw the good money into the fire to burn it up: but you will let the devil steal your soul, nay, you will give your soul to him."

The closing denunciation was in his most piercing tone of voice and earnest manner, producing in the assembly a thrill of deep feeling. He then prayed in the same figurative strains; sometimes, however, producing an involuntary smile, by the oddity of his expressions, and again bringing tears, by touches of most simple eloquence, and sincere enforcement of religious truth. He was at that time a child of nature, under the supreme control of grace. Many will attribute their conviction and conversion, under God, to his faithful warnings, pungent reproofs, or powerful exhortations. It often happened that many who went to his meetings to make or have sport, stayed there, to ask an interest in his prayers; and with all his eccentricities, he was a useful member of the Methodist Episcopal Church on Gloucester Circuit.

Among the pioneers of Methodism in West Jersey, as we have said, there were several preachers, itinerant and local, distinguished for eccentricities. In all those cases, however, real piety and fervent zeal were so conspicuous, as to redeem the individual from censure; they were like their brethren, nay, more remarkable

for sincerity, and earnest, laborious, and successful. Who could stop to lecture such men, or reprove them for speaking or acting a little unlike other men; their memory will live in time, while the memento erected by themselves in the hearts of the people, or those more ostensible monuments of marble, remain to tell of the sayings and doings of those men of God, by whose zealous efforts the field of Methodism was entered boldly, cleared and prepared for the seed of truth and the abundant harvest which now waves in beautiful abundance all over these once spiritually barren and wilderness regions.

Surely these "righteous" should be "had in everlasting remembrance." The sepulchres of many of them are with us who remain, and in these annals a purpose is cherished, to chisel the characters out, and render the reading of the monuments of departed worth more certain and satisfactory, by an effort to make the lines of ancient record legible to the eyes of all, that the church of the Lord Jesus may be edified.

CHAPTER XIV.

Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God giveth the increase.—EPISTLE.

IN the Minutes of conference for 1811, the first mention is made of New-Mills Circuit, West Jersey District. Rev. S. Budd and the venerable Daniel Fidler were the preachers for that year. The name of old Bethel was merged in Gloucester, and various changes took place upon the district, all showing the wonderful spread of the gospel; and the great increase which the Lord gave to his church. In the year 1812, New-Mills Circuit numbered eight hundred and fifty-seven whites, and thirty-three coloured; Gloucester, one thousand one hundred and thirty-six; Cumberland, nine hundred and forty-nine; Salem, nine hundred and eighty; Camden, three hundred and four; Burlington, two hundred and fifty, and thirty-one coloured; Freehold, seven hundred and thirty-six.—Total, five thousand two hundred and twelve. In 1816 New-Jersey was thrown again into one vast district, (the Rev. Jas. Smith being presiding elder of the whole,) and so remained during his term and that of Rev. Lawrence M'Combs,

until 1823, when the state was formed into two districts.

In the year 1817. another son of New-Jersey, and labourer on West Jersey District, fell a victim to consumption, that disease which destroys so many of the choicest preachers.

Rev. John Van Schoick was born in the county of Monmouth, and when about twenty years of age, at a camp meeting held in the year 1807, near New-Mills. he was arrested by the Spirit of truth, but not until November, 1808, did he obtain deliverance through faith in Christ. After having passed through a series of painful struggles for the blessing of loving grace, he, conceiving it to be his duty to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, and labouring with that view, was noticed favourably by his brethren, recommended, and admitted into the Philadelphia Conference on trial in 1810, and appointed to Asbury Circuit, East Jersey. He successively travelled in Pennsylvania and Jersey, but chiefly the latter, namely, in 1813-14, Trenton; 1815-16, Burlington; where, in the last year, his health failed. Excessive labours performed while in a feeble state of body, and exposure in travelling, occasioned the development of his fatal disease. His affliction was borne with patience,

and his zeal for the Lord of Hosts prompted him, when he could do no more publicly, to exhort those who visited him to seek after holiness.

Shortly before his death, seeing a covering of snow upon the ground, he observed: "I shall never see the face of the earth again, but shall leave it covered with an emblem of the purity of that felicity my soul is going to enjoy." During the last moments he suffered violent pain in the region of the heart, but had strength to exclaim, "Though my flesh and heart fail, yet God is the strength of my soul, my portion for ever!"

His distressed wife inquired if death appeared terrible; he replied, with a smile, "O no!" He called upon those in the room to continue in prayer while he uttered the words, "Come, Lord, roll on the victory. Hasten the moment of deliverance; when will these cords be loosened, that my soul may take its flight?" At last, looking around the room, he said, "I am going," and soon ceased to breathe. The testimony relative to brother Van Schoick's life and labours, is, that he was a gifted and acceptable preacher, possessing remarkably good abilities. The Lord owned his efforts, and he served the Lord and the church fervently and faithfully.

Those worthies of past days: how does me-

mory delight to bring back their forms and features—their sayings and doings! The Rev. Solomon Sharp, one of the most powerful preachers of his day, during this year, 1816, travelled Cumberland Circuit with most remarkable success. He was, indeed, a man of an eagle eye and lionlike voice; his tall, even majestic figure, his countenance, sternly good, and his flowing hair, all added to the impressiveness of his appearance: when his voice arose to its highest tones, it seemed thunder-peals indeed, before which the wicked have fallen or fled as he poured forth a full river-tide of gospel eloquence, the sentence of condemnation to the guilty, or the invitations and promises of mercy and salvation to the penitent. Perhaps few men ever produced a more decided sensation for or against themselves, than did brother Sharp. Many loved him, more feared him, and not a few hated him most cordially; the last, only among the unconverted, of course.

“ They have passed away, those holy men,
May we hope to look on their like again.”

The year brother Sharp, as stated, rode Cumberland Circuit, there was a large log-cabin situated a few miles from the village of Port Elizabeth; there dwelt a poor, pious family, named Penn, and the house was a regular

preaching-place for the circuit. The owner of the place, and head of the family, answered to the name of Richard Penn. The cabin had been the spiritual birthplace of many souls, and it was known among the ungodly as "Dick Penn's sheep-pen." In that humble place, standing beside a small pine table, before him the old family Bible, a Hymn-book, and a cup of water : the two rooms of the cabin, the doorway, the windows, and every spot within hearing distance, crowded with anxious hearers, has often been seen the noble form of Solomon Sharp. A glorious revival of religion commenced in that cottage, and spread over a great part of the circuit. Scores of precious souls were converted here, and elsewhere in that region, during the progress of the work of God. Some have died in Christ; others yet survive, living epistles, to be known and read of all acquainted with them. In a revival, under the power of the Holy Spirit, while preaching, brother Sharp was truly great; he was even terribly great, and, as before stated, the wicked either fell or fled before him.

A worthy co-worker in the blessed cause upon that circuit, was the late Fithian Stratton, a local preacher and a man of God, well known in his day in that part of the country, where he

laboured extensively. He also was one of the eccentric kind, an oddity in his way, bold in reproving sinners, perfectly regardless of all consequences to himself in preaching the most unpalatable truths, even to the making of positive and personal application of his severe strictures as he went on with a subject, saying, as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man!" Indeed, the features of severity and plainness in preaching were as well known in him as in Mr. Sharp. The two were well mated, and warm friends. Their first meeting in the road, as detailed by one who knew the circumstances, was characteristic. On a cold gloomy day in spring, just after the conference closed, Solomon Sharp came riding slowly along the road from Millville toward Port Elizabeth; he was on horseback, and his saddle-bags, umbrella, cloak, and whole appearance, indicated his calling. On the same road, and coming from the last-named place, might be seen the oddest looking figure of a man, upon the oddest kind of a horse. As the two riders approached each other, both looked up, each reined in and stopped his horse, and both gazed for a minute in silence, each at the other. "You are old Solomon Sharp." "You are old Fithian Stratton." They had never met before in the world. This

meeting was the commencement of an intimacy and affectionate friendship, which continued through the subsequent life of both those men of God.

As a specimen of old friend Stratton's *delicacy*, he one day met a preacher who had a brother not a member of any church. "Well, Jess, I saw your brother yesterday: he is not in hell yet; I told him I felt glad and thankful that God kept him out of hell so long, and hoped he would turn and repent before the devil got him."

The peculiar indelicacy of his remarks would sometimes produce a blush of shame upon a whole congregation; but the only excuse was, "O, it is only Fithian Stratton; he must say just what he pleases, and that which comes first to his mind." They that minister in holy things should ever remember, that by entering upon disgusting details in discoursing upon vice, they may become teachers of licentiousness, instead of being preachers of righteousness. It is possible to corrupt an innocent mind by leading it into the caverns of concealed crime, until it becomes a participant in sins before unthought of, or, at least, utterly unknown. This good man would not for a world have done an evil thing if he knew it, yet he said many things

which education, refinement, and morality would have censured. Yet numbers will praise the Lord in eternity for the great good received through the instrumentality of rough old Fithian Stratton, who lived for many years a faithful servant of the church for Christ's sake. Contemporary with Stratton was father Morgan, of the same district, an ordained local preacher, of most excellent character and useful talents; an oddity in his way also. He was the "Gretna Green" marrying man of all that part of the country, but lived a bachelor himself. He was a man of reading habits, of sound sense, firm religious principles, and a sterling Methodist.

In the lower part of the district, (at present called Atlantic County,) resided a contemporary of both the before-mentioned preachers, whose name and fame are yet remembered in all that region. He was called father Lucas—a man of deep piety and good preaching abilities, who was the "matrimonial blacksmith" of all the lower part of that country, and a general favourite with all classes; for, as was the case with Morgan, old father Lucas has united in marriage the first, second, and even the third generation. Along the seacoast of the present Bargaintown Circuit he was well known, and actively engaged, in conjunction with the travel-

ling preachers, in spreading the gospel. Of his eccentric sayings and doings a large amount could be collected, for he was a remarkable man in his day.

CHAPTER XV.

“Take my soul and body’s powers :
Take my memory, mind, and will ;
All my goods and all my hours,
All I think, or speak, or do.”—HYMN.

THIS was the extent of the dedication with which those old preachers devoted themselves to God and the church. There are but few of them left. To several veterans of the itinerancy we are largely indebted for these desultory reminiscences of the past. Among that number, it is our peculiar pleasure to express the obligations we owe to the venerable Rev. John Walker, a supernumerary of the New-Jersey Conference. We have frequently, within a few years past, visited the good old minister at his residence, called Pilgrim’s Retreat, pleasantly situated on the main road passing through Clarksborough, Salem County. The house is a low, wide, cottage-like building, combining all the home comforts the retired preacher desires, in connexion with a lot of ground attached, and a little garden

and orchard. His amiable daughter, who resides with him, has presented a proof of filial piety, in devoting her life to the comfort of her remaining parent, but seldom witnessed, even among Christians, and worthy of all commendation. Father Walker, as he is familiarly named, has contributed at various periods, from the stores of memory, a rich fund of information relative to the origin of Methodism in parts of West Jersey. Many of those items we shall present in the progress of these sketches; deeming the authority of those who knew, acted, and suffered, amidst the scenes, and in the days gone by, quite sufficient to authenticate our narrative.

Rev. John Walker was born in December, 1764, in the township of Chester, Burlington County, New-Jersey. When a lad, his parents removed to Mount Holly, where he learned the trade of shoemaking. In the year 1785, he first joined the Methodists in Mount Holly. In 1787 he received license to preach, and after sundry changes removed to Philadelphia, and having become truly joined to the Lord and his church by the spirit of grace, he was received into the Philadelphia Conference in 1802, and appointed to travel Trenton Circuit, under the charge of A. Turck. This circuit was several

hundred miles in extent, and very rough. Brother Turck was a good man, but was said to be very exacting as a preacher in charge. He died, however, in the triumphs of grace. Sending for his colleague, he gave ample directions for the management of the circuit, which had been changed from a four to a six weeks' circuit, exhorted him to faithfulness, embraced him with tears of holy gladness, and expired in peace.

Brother Walker's second circuit, Flanders, embraced a mountainous, stony, and difficult region of country, but the Lord was with him, and wrought special deliverances on many occasions. Once, during the winter of the year, he was going to an appointment, in company with a young man; both were on horseback, and the snow was in some places five feet deep. Their only path was a sled-track, which the people tried to keep open. His horse would approach a snow-bank, and stop and strike with his fore foot, and beat a way through; his companion, on his animal, following after as he could. At length brother W.'s horse plunged into a hole: the rider, benumbed with cold, fell upon the snow, one foot remaining in the stirrup. The horse arose; the master, right under him, was exposed to be crushed. However, he succeeded

in getting his foot loose, and the horse started off, leaving the rider in the snow-bank. The young man, his comrade, had gone forward, and in a few minutes after being extricated from the snow-bank, they beheld W.'s horse at some distance, near a fence, making his way off. W. called to him ; the animal stopped, listened, looked round, and came trotting back to where his master stood. While adjusting the saddle and saddle-bags, the horse licked his hand, and seemed glad to get his master again. The weary pilgrims of the snow then gave up the idea of travelling twelve miles through such a road, and turned into the village of New-Germantown. This horse of Mr. Walker's, which he had used for more than twenty years in the regular work of itinerating, was a remarkable animal. He was a large, strong, noble-spirited beast, very docile, and "well educated," as the people said, for, by certain signs, he would tell his master whether he had been fed or neglected. He lived to be more than twenty-six years old, and finally became so infirm that he could not get up without help, until at length the friends, out of compassion, shot him in his master's absence. The memory of the faithful horse yet remains in the family, and especially is it cherished by the aged minister, whose companion he was for

so many years. That remarkable man, Richard Lyon, travelled with brother W., and the latter has communicated some facts in regard to him, quite characteristic. Among those incidents were the following :—

“The Philadelphia Conference of the year 1800, appointed Richard Swain and R. Lyon to travel Salem Circuit. Below Bridgeton, about six miles, stands the Fairfield Presbyterian Church, which was instituted in 1697. The last pastor, Rev. Ethan Osborn, took the charge in 1789, and continues to this day, as a pastor, to officiate occasionally. Before the Methodist Episcopal Church of Fairfield was erected, when the Rev. Sylvester Hutchinson travelled Salem Circuit, he was very cordially invited by the Presbyterian pastor to occupy his pulpit; he did so on several rounds, and the result was a work of grace, by which *numbers* were added, *not* to the Methodist Episcopal Church, but to the membership of the old stone church. This was a fulfilment of the old adage, ‘You beat the bush, and I’ll catch the rabbit.’ Forthwith brother H. declined any other invitations, and confined his labours, regular and extra, to the legitimate objects of his mission, as connected with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Subsequently the Methodist Episcopal Church of

Fairfield was erected upon ground given for the purpose by Rev. Michael Irving, a local preacher, of sterling piety, good abilities, and great usefulness. The two churches stood but a short space apart, perhaps a mile.

“In the year 1800, as before stated, R. Swain and R. Lyon travelled Salem Circuit, this place being one of the important appointments. R. Lyon, who was a bold, strong, and rather reckless man, fearing neither the power of man nor Satan, and generally successful in having a revival wherever he went, began to exhibit his capacity to win souls on this circuit, and resolved to make an effort in Fairfield. On one occasion, while concluding a public meeting in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Fairfield, he proclaimed to the congregation, that on that day four weeks he would be there, ‘preach, work a miracle, and have a revival.’ This announcement spread consternation through the assemblage. Several local preachers were present. Lyon first asked the members of society if they would pray, in the intervening time, for a revival? Taking the assent of the members as granted, he then asked the preachers. Dr. Parvin, a distinguished resident of Cedarville, on the question being put to him, nodded assent. ‘Brother A.,’ addressing another, ‘will you?’

he nodded. ‘Brother Irving, will you pray?’ Brother I. was rather disquieted: fearful that Lyon’s pretensions or proposals amounted to presumption, he sat silent and immoveable. ‘Well, if brother Irving will not pray, others will, and we shall have a revival, for the Lord will revive religion, and we that are alive shall see it this time four weeks.’ The tidings soon spread. The people of that whole region of country were greatly excited. Brother Irving wrote to the preacher in charge, Rev. R. Swain, to try and meet Lyon at Fairfield, at the appointed time, in order to ‘keep *the Lyon* in order.’

“The day, and Lyon, both came in due course. He rode to the usual post, dismounted, and fastened his horse. The yard and house were crowded to excess, for the people came from all quarters to see the miracle. Lyon entered the house, and when he ascended the pulpit, found brother Swain there. He agreed that Swain should preach, but would not, or did not, give any explanation as yet. At the conclusion of the sermon Lyon arose. All was hushed. Expectation was on tiptoe. He began: ‘Lyon is here, and he will yet preach; the miracle is there,’ pointing with his hand. ‘There is the miracle before your eyes; who ever saw the

Presbyterian pastor, and his flock, in this church before? that is the miracle, for it is out of the order of their nature, if not of God's nature.' He proceeded: 'Now I shall preach, and the Lord will do the rest—we shall see the revival.'

"He did preach, in a strain of overwhelming, awful eloquence. The appeals to the heart, conscience, and every feeling of the soul of that immense multitude, seemed to roll over them like thunder, and pierce like lightning; the house seemed to shake, and ere long believers shouted victory; sinners were awakened, and screamed aloud for mercy; others fell, and many fled from the place;—a work of God, such as was never seen there before, and numbers were soundly converted.

"The parson and his people made their escape as soon as the 'uproar commenced.' The brethren, seeing the wonderful displays of the power of God, helped, like men of God, as they were. But brother I. and many others were seriously alarmed, not knowing how Lyon was to avoid the charge of being presumptuous. The whole affair passed from the minds of the people, and they became absorbed in the revival, which continued for some time. They became too happy in grace to be very critical."

CHAPTER XVI.

There was great joy in that city.—Acts.

SALEM Circuit, during the years 1804–5, under the pastoral care of Rev. John Walker, was favoured with a gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Among the helpers of brother W. the first year, was Rev. John Durbin; a good man, it is believed, and a faithful labourer, whose work was soon accomplished. An opinion prevailed to some extent among the old preachers—whether it was imported with the early English preachers, we cannot now ascertain—that “The man and minister called of God to this work, is *immortal* until his work is done.” This opinion, or saying, has been repeated within our time; and if there is not a leaning toward necessity and predestination in the saying, it most certainly breathes and inspires that spirit, which may be termed the Chivalry of Methodism. Brother W.’s colleague the second year was Rev. Nathan Swain, whose memory yet lives among the West Jersey Methodists of the olden time.

The circuit at that time included the three counties of Salem, Cumberland, and Cape May. For some years the latter stood alone, with a

single preacher. On this large field, of several hundred miles around, the above-named brethren preached thirty-one times a month—rain or sunshine, summer or winter—besides visiting families, attending classes, and holding extra services at funerals, revivals, &c. About three hundred souls, white and coloured, were received into the church during their labours.

Actuated by the “call of God,” and a sense of the worth of souls, and imbued with the true missionary spirit, those early ministers did not wait to be sent for, but sought for places in which to preach the gospel; and wheresoever they found an open door, in they went, preaching Jesus to them also.

Bridgeton, the county-seat of Cumberland, was in the route of these preachers; and J. Walker was the first to carry the glad tidings of the gospel to that town, and form a class there. Several Methodists had removed into the place; but there was no regular preaching, no class, and but few persons favourable to Methodism, or its introduction there—the Presbyterians occupying all that part of West Jersey.

Having obtained the consent of the proper authorities to use the court-house, a public meeting was held, and a class of fourteen mem-

bers was formed, and the late William Brooks appointed leader. A good work commenced, but not in the court-house, the class not being permitted to meet there. The class, prayer, and "converting meetings," were held at brother Brooks' and other private houses. The late Rev. Jonathan Brooks and wife were among the early converts. He became an able local preacher, pious and useful. A lot of ground was soon obtained, and the first Methodist Episcopal Church built.

Bridgeton is beautifully situated upon the ancient Cæsarea River, or present Cohansey: the stream divides the upper from the lower town, and the bridge gives name to the locality. In 1823 Bridgeton became a station, under the charge of the Rev. Charles Pitman. During his time the work of grace prospered abundantly; and his spiritual children are numerous in that place, even to this day. In the year 1826, the late lamented John Potts was stationed in Bridgeton. While he was there the Presbyterian pastor preached a sermon on the Calvinistic decrees, in which he levelled his literary artillery at the despised Methodists, especially the preachers. Brother P. answered his sneers, and a challenged controversy was soon entered upon, both from the pulpit and the weekly

newspaper published in the town. The reverend gentleman, on the side of Calvinism, quoted Greek, &c., but brother Potts, so far from being confounded, was more than his match, confuting his logic, overthrowing his Greek, and exciting his unamiable propensities, even to the mastery of his better reason and religion; while brother Potts himself remained inflexible, cool, and firm, and finally proved victorious.

Controversy is, perhaps, an evil; yet often it is a very necessary one—as too many of the high-toned sects of our country would fain write or preach down Methodism, if they could—rendering a defence of the great truths of Christianity, livingly exemplified in Methodistic doctrines, absolutely imperative, especially when a learned doctor of divinity, of the Calvinian school, condescends to call Methodism a down-right heresy.

In 1826, Salem Town became a Methodist station. The Rev. John Lednum was the first pastor, and the venerable Thomas Ware supernumerary. An excellent memoir of the latter, written by himself, is printed at the Book-Room.

Beyond Bridgeton, upon the same circuit, (Salem,) in the year 1815–16, was the village of Millville, located upon Maurice River bank.

A number of manufactories of iron, glass, &c., were erected here, and the buildings and population increased, but Methodism was not introduced until about the year 1810, when preaching was held in an old school-house. A few persons belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church resided in the village. To the south of the main street was an unfinished stone building, which was purchased, and mainly through the instrumentality of brother Spencer Trary, was converted into a Methodist church, and a small class of seven or eight persons was formed. In a few years Millville became the headquarters of a large circuit, and the spiritual birthplace of hundreds of souls, until the society alone more than filled the meeting-house; so that the brethren were constrained to enlarge, or rather build a new church, to accommodate the three hundred members of that one village. This building was dedicated to the worship of God in the year 1846. Millville yet remains on a circuit. With so large a membership, there is a prejudice existing against stations, which has prevented any change on the subject. They have preaching by the travelling and local ministers, alternately; and the members have always been characterized as "old-fashioned Methodists"—going forward in the good old

ways of the fathers, detesting all innovations upon established usages and ancient customs.

There is, perhaps, no village in West Jersey which has been so remarkably favoured with copious outpourings of divine grace, and numerous conversions, as Millville. Some will say that it is because they avoid new modes, and keep to the old landmarks of Methodism, preserving their unity with the circuit, and loving circuit preachers, who are not ashamed to ride on horseback and carry the saddlebags, and travel as itinerants should, instead of becoming local in fact, by staying for the term of two years in one place, and then merely removing ten miles, perhaps not half that distance, to another station for two years more ; and becoming, in the course of a few years, so exceedingly delicate and afraid of the weather, that they cannot be prevailed upon to leave their comfortable nest, and go into the country a few miles to preach in an old school-house. No: the people of the surrounding country, even for six miles round, if the case is so, must all come into town on the sabbath, and attend preaching at the station church. Moreover, the members residing a few miles in the country are seldom visited by the stationed preacher. He keeps no horse, and only on special occasions, when a

dinner or tea party is made up, do the country members receive a pastoral visit.

We have simply given the arguments or reasonings of others upon this subject; not presuming to present our own opinions on so important a matter. We should, in fact, take the opposite side of the question, unless the conferences could be induced to adopt the British plan, of throwing the whole work or field of the itinerancy into circuits, and have no stations. This course has been agitated in private conversation for some years; and it may ultimately be adopted, as a refuge from Congregationalism—toward which a venerable bishop declared to a full conference “we are fast tending.” Itinerancy is the secret of the great success of Methodism in spreading Scriptural religion over the United States; and unless that system is perpetuated, as it is with our British brethren, doubts are seriously entertained in regard to the continual and future prosperity of Methodism in America. An evil is now apparent in West Jersey, which is, that by the multiplicity of small stations, the ministry in some places is poorly sustained, and the adjacent country is most lamentably neglected. All the efforts of the preacher, however zealous he may be, cannot suffice to bring the unconverted and careless

into the village church on the sabbath: hence in some places the heart of the minister has been so affected with the spiritual destitution around his charge, that he has made an afternoon appointment, and would ride out once in two weeks at least, and find a school-house filled with persons, who could not be induced to come to the village church; or, sometimes during the pleasant season, or in favourable weather, the meeting would be held in a private house, and crowds would attend. Numbers of souls have been saved, and classes formed, within three miles of the station.

A place called White Marsh, about four miles from Millville, is an old preaching-place, where a society of thirty or forty members existed before there was any Methodist Episcopal Church in Millville. In fact, in White Marsh was the origin of the village membership; for many who had been converted in the old school-house, joined in the village.

In 1824, Bridgeton Station returned one hundred and forty-eight members, seven of whom were coloured. This was after the work of grace began, under the first pastor, brother Pitman. In 1826, Salem Station returned one hundred and five members, and these small beginnings have amounted, in both charges, to

some hundreds of members each, in the course of years.

Woodbury, in Gloucester County, is an instance of the difficulties to be encountered and overcome in forming small stations. Methodism was introduced into that village in an extraordinary manner. A Methodist from the seashore had been so unfortunate as to become a debtor; and in those days imprisonment for a period, dependent upon the purse and malignity of the creditor, was a usual occurrence. This man carried the grace and blessing of the Lord with him into the gloomy apartments of the jail; and there proclaimed the truth, either from the grated windows, to his visitors, or in some other manner, until the hearts of some were reached, and stirred to seek the Lord. The result was, that meetings were soon held in private houses, souls were converted, and a class formed, and the preachers of Gloucester Circuit were invited to come and preach to them, take charge of the little flock, and glorify God on the behalf of the poor insolvent debtor, imprisoned in Woodbury jail, through whose instrumentality Methodism had originated in that place. In 1828 Woodbury became a station, with only fifty-four members. Rev. R. Gerry laboured exceedingly to promote the good cause there,

and after him others entered into his labours with zeal and industry: but the experiment failed, and after a few years Woodbury progressed backward into the adjoining circuit! Within a few years the change has been tried again in that village, but with very doubtful results.

To the east of Millville, about five or six miles, is old Cumberland Furnace, a Methodist preaching-place in old times, rendered remarkable as the chief theatre of the renowned Wesley Budd, of "glory and shame." The village consists almost exclusively of the persons or families employed about the iron-works; and the proprietors felt that it would be promotive of their interest to build a Methodist Episcopal Church, and accordingly one was soon erected. That edifice has been the birthplace of scores of souls, whose shouts of glory and songs of praise were heard afar off. On a revival occasion, or at any time of a good meeting, their mode of conducting worship (which was peculiar to themselves) sadly puzzled many of the preachers sent to labour there. The members could sing well, especially ditties, and, if led by "Old Trusty"—a venerable black, whose history is worth sketching; and when one person was called upon to pray aloud in a prayer or class-

meeting, immediately all hands would begin and pray aloud—yea, at the utmost stretch of their voices, as though they were trying who could make the loudest noise! and when they found out (which was sometimes difficult) that the praying brother had concluded, all would cease, very orderly, kindly, and promptly. Talk of noise and extravagance: could we but paint the noise; could we but picture the jumpings, fallings, contortions, and uproar there displayed, it would be a scene worthy of Hogarth's immortal powers!

The preachers often tried to correct, or direct, these displays of emotion and commotion; but, invariably, their interference "would kill everything." Not a sound would be uttered, not an amen, even, would be heard; but, as mute as fish, there they would sit or kneel, and only try to sing: for if not permitted to go on in their own way, they would not go at all. And this mode seemed hereditary, descending from the aged parents to the children; young men and young women would alike almost show forth the same spirit and manner of worship. Often of a summer night, after the regular meeting at the church, a company of the members would go out into the pine forest adjoining the village, and there they would have a glorious time,

sing and shout, and make a noise, to their hearts' content, and even until almost break of day. Many of those people were most noble Methodists—strict, devout, faithful in all respects, and liberal, to the extent of their ability, in sustaining the church and all its institutions.

CHAPTER XVII.

Wondrous things doest thou, O Lord, among the nations.—BIBLE.

ONE of the greatest prodigies of those early days, among the Methodists, was "Black Harry." He had been a slave in the South, but was manumitted, converted, and became a preacher; which at that time was considered a most extraordinary affair. Harry flourished long before Bishop Allen, of Philadelphia, had established his African Methodist Episcopal Church. For several years Harry travelled with Bishop Asbury, and preached alternately with that excellent man in many of the States of the Union, but especially in Pennsylvania and New-Jersey.

What caused the bishop to part with Harry, our informant could not state, but Harry was sent into Jersey, in 1803, to travel on Trenton

Circuit, in company with Rev. John Walker, whose reminiscences of Black Harry are distinct and interesting. At that time Harry was becoming old, and his head gray. He was of middling stature; slim, but very strongly built, and very black; capable of great labour and much endurance. He also possessed a most musical voice, which he could modulate with the skill of a master, and use with most complete success in the pathetic, terrible, or persuasive parts of a discourse. While Harry was travelling with Bishop Allen, the bishop attempted to teach him to read, (for he could not read;) but, to use Harry's phrase, "when he tried to read, he lost the gift of preaching," and so gave it up entirely.

Harry could remember passages of Scripture and quote them accurately; and hymns, also, which he had heard read, he could repeat or sing. He was never at a loss in preaching, but was very acceptable wherever he went, and few of the white preachers could equal him, in his way. When he was questioned as to his preaching abilities, complete command of voice, aptness in language, and free delivery, as to Scriptural and doctrinal truth, his reply was a description of the Elocution of Faith: "I sing by faith, pray by faith, preach by faith, and do

every thing by faith ; without faith in the Lord Jesus I can do nothing."

Many curious circumstances occurred while Harry was on Trenton Circuit with brother W. On one occasion, at an appointment at Hacketts-town, there was a lady in the house where the preachers stayed who declared " she would not hear the black." Harry heard it, and retired into a corner in the garden, and prayed in great fervour, until the hour of meeting. It was arranged that brother W. should preach, and Harry sat upon a chair in front of the preacher, the service being held in the dwelling-house. At the conclusion of the sermon, Harry arose, stood behind the chair, and began, in the most humble manner, to speak of sin as a disease ; all were affected there, and the Lord had sent a remedy by the hands of a physician ; but, alas ! he was black ! and some might reject the only means of cure, because of the hands by which it was sent to them that day. He went on in the same strain, until all hearts were moved ; he then prayed, (few had the gift of prayer as had Black Harry ; he was like Bishop Asbury in this respect—awful, powerful, and overwhelming !) There was a great time ; the lady was cut to the heart, and speedily converted, as were many others, on that memorable occasion.

The justly celebrated Dr. Sargent, of Philadelphia, pronounced Black Harry "the greatest natural orator he ever heard." We may be enabled to collect other reminiscences of this interesting man, whose memory should never die in Jersey, and present them in a future work. He died in Philadelphia, and was buried in the ground attached to Old Zoar, on which occasion the late Jeffrey Bewley, a coloured preacher, and himself a wonder for capacity and performances, in eulogizing Black Harry, applied a term by which he was well known: "Here lies the African wonder." Harry was, indeed, a wonder of grace, a wonder as a gifted minister of the gospel; all things considered, he was the greatest wonder or prodigy of the kind that had ever appeared before, whatever education and religion may have produced since his day.

West Jersey has been remarkably addicted to holding camp-meetings. It may not be uninteresting to the future generation of Methodists, to know how or why this kind of meeting was introduced.

We find in Jesse Lee's History of Methodism, the first, and probably the most authentic account, which can be given of this matter. He states, under the date 1801, "About this time

camp-meetings were first introduced. I never could learn where they began to hold these meetings, whether in South Carolina, Tennessee, or Kentucky. They originated, it is believed, in the West or South-western country, through necessity, without any special design; there was no plan laid for them in the beginning. In the new parts of the country, where the people were but thinly settled, such crowds collected together to worship, that no house or church could contain them! The ministers were obliged to preach in the woods, and the people were compelled to lodge on the ground, in order to be at the meeting of the next day. There were not neighbours enough to entertain the strangers; and the meetings were sometimes continued for three or four days in succession. On some occasions, when the work of the Lord was uncommonly powerful, and the souls of many in deep distress, the meeting would be continued all night, without intermission! and sometimes persons were struck down by the power of God, and lay helpless most part of the night, and could not be removed. The ministers and people felt it their duty to tarry with their friends, to encourage and pray with them in their distress.

“ After awhile the people who came to these

great meetings, expecting to be detained, perhaps, for days and nights, prepared cloth for tents, or made booths of the bushes, and brought provisions with them, that they might not be burdensome to any persons of the neighbourhood. The people soon witnessed the good effects of staying together for several days and nights in succession, and keeping up the meetings, and it was thought proper to advise them to come prepared to remain day and night on the ground, and wait upon the Lord continually; and these meetings were soon distinguished by the name of camp-meetings."

When this kind of meetings commenced in West Jersey is not easily ascertained. Thirty years ago it was very usual to hold camp-meetings; and within less than twenty years we have known four camp-meetings to be held on a single circuit in West Jersey during one summer and fall—that is, one big, and three little ones. That year the zeal for camp-meetings amounted to a sort of *mania*; which the presiding elder on one district was obliged to check, by exercising his ministerial authority in the quarterly conference, or among the preachers, requesting them in future to consult him, and that excellent small affair called common sense, in the appointment of extra demands upon

themselves and the people of their respective circuits. This course was most judicious, and had the desired effect. The excessive use of even a good thing may nullify or neutralize its advantages. An elder assured us on one occasion, that during the season from June until October, he had lived in the woods nearly the whole time.

One of the greatest camp-meetings, in number of tents, extent, and perhaps usefulness, ever held in West Jersey, was that in a place called Forkbridge. The first camp-meeting was held there, perhaps, quite thirty years ago, and for fifteen years after, in regular succession, as we were informed by the aged proprietor of the ground. The tents were constructed of thin pine boards or light slabs, supplied abundantly by an adjacent sawmill. The camp was laid out in a proper square, leaving ample space in the centre for the preachers' stand or pulpit, and the "fire-box," in which pine knots were burned every night, to enlighten the whole camp. The tents were arranged beside each other, until the front lines were filled; then a space was allowed for a street: a second row of tents was then erected; and so they continued, until there were several four-square rows of tents, a street dividing each square, and the number

became almost incredible ; increasing for years, until there must have been several hundred tents.

At camp-meetings in West Jersey good order has generally prevailed ; but in early times, before Methodism was so universally diffused over the country, there were sometimes serious affrays. The prohibition of selling any articles of eatables or drinkables within three miles of the camp-ground, incensed some of the Gentiles, who desired to make merchandise of the Methodists and the occasion. Many would appear there with a wagon-load of articles, among which would be hid that which was desperately contraband, namely, *whiskey*, and this was to be dealt out secretly ! When the facts were ascertained, these persons were ordered off by the managers of the meeting, clothed with full powers, by the law of the land, so to do ; and, if refractory, the establishment has been seized by an officer of the law.

Sometimes a gang of *rowdies*—for there were in those days in West Jersey young men meriting, by their base character and conduct, this well-known appellation—would collect at the camp-meeting to have a frolic, and accomplish their abominable objects. These “outsiders” congregated in the woods surrounding the camp

—where the wagons, horses, and feeding-places were—and there, especially during the night season, they would concoct their schemes of annoyance, cut the harness, take out linch-pins from wagons, take off wheels, &c., or they would march into the meeting, and parade round the inside of the tents, where the assembly were hearing the gospel, or holding prayer-meetings; and if the gang were hindered, ordered to sit down, or to go away, it did sometimes happen that blows were struck, parried, and returned—the Methodists mostly having the advantage in numbers, and the aid of the constables. The wicked, driven out, would begin to whoop, dance, sing, swear, and make all manner of noises; inso-much that the outer region of a Methodist camp-meeting came to be termed “The Devil’s Camp.” According to the representation made in the Book of Job, when the sons of God were met together, Satan also assembled; and so it was, or so it seemed to be, in these cases; for their conduct, spirit, and language, proved them to be the children of the wicked one.

The mystery is, why the unconverted should select a camp-meeting—a scene of the display of God’s spiritual power, and the glory of his rich redeeming grace—for the performance of their unhallowed deeds. Yet it is so: and

while many are hearing God speak to them through his ministers—receiving pardon, peace, and holy joy, through faith in Jesus; or becoming, through sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and application of the precious blood of sprinkling, heirs of glory, sons or daughters of the true God—these miserable beings, revelling in the “devil’s camp,” are rapidly rushing onward in the way of daring, God-defying, soul-destroying wickedness, to premature death and eternal punishment. An instance occurred but a few years ago. At a camp-meeting in West Jersey, where the power of the Lord in the gospel of his Son, the blessed and holy child Jesus, was made gloriously manifest, there was one young man, of respectable parentage and well-cultivated mind, who attended the religious services constantly, but attired in a most grotesque and ridiculous dress, calculated to excite the laughter of all who beheld him. The work of the Lord had been very great for the whole week of the meeting, and on Saturday, at the usual hour of the morning, the concluding services began at the preachers’ stand. So powerfully wrought the Spirit of the Lord, that many fell to the ground; others cried aloud for mercy; and a number became witnesses of the great power of God to change the heart—to

give them a new heart and a right spirit ; so that it seemed impossible to silence the people, or stop the work. The few preachers who had remained to see the close of the meeting, consulted together, and concluded to hold on, if a sufficient number of the families would remain in their tents over the sabbath, and continue the meeting until the Monday following. This was soon ascertained. A number of the families of Methodists were quite willing to stay where such a work of grace was going on, and sent for an additional supply of provisions. From about ten o'clock on Saturday morning, until about daylight on sabbath morning, the meeting at the altar of the stand continued, it is believed, without an intermission, except to hear a sermon or two on the sabbath. On Saturday the ministers could not preach. Several attempts were made to address the meeting ; but the speaker could not be heard, on account of the cries of the distressed souls, and the joyful shouts of the pardoned. Many persons fell, and lay in a sort of trance for twenty-four hours or more ; and on sabbath it was known, on inquiry, that fifty souls had been converted during that space of time, from Saturday morning until Sunday morning. Numbers had retired to their homes in the mean time, and the exact

number brought to the Lord, by his own Spirit, on that occasion, eternity alone can reveal.

The young man before mentioned, went through all the meeting apparently untouched by the softening spirit of religion: those who conversed with him, and exhorted him to “flee from the wrath to come,” said that he seemed more hardened toward the close of the meeting, which was undoubtedly the case; for if the gospel was not permitted to work “life in him,” it must have become a “savour of death unto death.” He was seized with a disease common during the summer season, and was taken to his home very sick: physicians were called, remedies applied, and his friends did all they could to save him; but it was death from the beginning. The doctors informed him of his real condition—that he was near his end; and friends advised him to pray for his soul’s salvation; but the only answer obtained from him was, “It is too late!” He refused to allow any minister or other person to pray with or for him; and in five days from the time he was taken with the disease, he was dead—a mournful example of the fatal consequences of trifling with the Lord God Almighty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all away — OLD
SAYING.

VERILY it is true, had the collection of these reminiscences of Methodism commenced but ten years earlier, we could have furnished a far richer repast of traditionary lore—a more particular history of the church in the regions of West Jersey. As we hear of one old brother minister, whom we intended to visit, dropping into the arms of death in this place, and another in that place, carrying with them the only authentic store of knowledge available on the subject of Methodism—its introduction and progress in these parts; alarm is excited lest all should depart, borne on the stream of time, beyond the reach of mortal voice or human effort to recall either the men of other days, or their memory of the past.

Standing upon Mount Holly, not long since, we beheld a scene of rural loveliness seldom equalled or surpassed. The mount derived its name from its elevation, some two hundred feet above the sea, and from the holly-trees with which the adjacent ground was ornamented. The cemetery, which occupies so conspicuous a

part of the declivity of the mount, lies outspread in its solemn beauty of marble monuments, relieved by shrubbery, and tasteful gravelled walks. The almost city of Mount Holly lies just beneath your feet, as it were, in all its grandeur of dwellings, public buildings, and active, living throngs of busy mortals.

The town is situated upon the north branch of the Rancocus, and was founded soon after its near neighbour, Burlington; perhaps as early in the history of West Jersey as 1680. Ancient records say the town consisted of two hundred houses before the war of the Revolution, and was a place of large business. Methodism was introduced about 1770, in all probability by the Rev. B. Abbott. The meetings were then held in the town-house, over the market—the only place attainable at that day by the despised followers of Wesley. The market, or town-house, became a scene of the Lord's power to save; a class was formed, the names of but a few of whose members have been rescued from oblivion—namely, Mrs. Mary Munroe; Mary Lees, afterward the wife of Rev. J. Walker; Mary Morrel, who subsequently became Mrs. Dobbins; the wife of Peter Shiras, Esq., whose name is not recollected; and last, though not least, Drusilla, “Old Drusy,” a coloured woman, remark-

able for good sense and real piety. These were as "a handful of corn," the seed of the future harvest. In 1781, Rev. Caleb B. Pedicord and Rev. Joseph Cromwell were appointed to West Jersey, which was one vast circuit.

Few vestiges of Methodism are discoverable relative to this period, except the satisfactory assurance that several persons were brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, by the active and efficient exertions of those servants of the Lord. If no other trophy of ministerial triumph were known, than the conversion of the late Rev. Thomas Ware, through the labours of Pedicord, that is glory enough for once, if the glory alone is to be considered; but both preachers were zealous, fearless, faithful ministers of the gospel, conveying the glad news to the inhabitants of Mount Holly. And it was news to them, for the gospel seldom sounded except a Methodist preacher blew the trumpet; for, alas! others feared to offend. Many ministers preached a mild, genteel, polite gospel; no bad words were used; O no! no hell, devil, damnation, &c. Hence, when the Methodists came and denounced sin to the people, in the words of the Scriptures, many of them said, "Behold how he swears!" "Only hear him blaspheme!" And in the account sometimes given

of a Methodist preacher who proclaimed the "terrors of the Lord," in an attempt to "persuade men," he would be described as a "madman ; for sometimes he cries, prays, and swears, in the same discourse." That these people should express such an opinion, was very excusable ; for they were accustomed to hear the "downy doctors of theology," whose soft eloquence would not disturb the equanimity of a mouse. They dealt not in harsh epithets and strong words ; and the terms of the Bible were not used, to describe a sinner, his sins, or the place of his punishment. What, mention hell to ears polite !

Whitefield was the first in this country to proclaim truth—the truth of God—in the words of God. Yea, the trumpet of that son of thunder and consolation beautifully combined, never gave out an uncertain or deceptive sound. The great and good Tennant, of Monmouth, caught the glorious sound, re-echoed the startling truths, and in the course of a few years a Scriptural style of preaching prevailed, and souls were awakened, repented, and became converted. No matter if called by the name of Presbyterian, or Protestant Episcopal, or Methodist ; the work of grace in the heart became the test of piety, not mere profession. "Pshaw !" said an old

Episcopalian, "I have been professing religion for twenty years, and I knew not its first lesson—its rudiments; the mere a, b, c. of piety—by *experience*; personal experience was a profound mystery to me."

But after a time the "leaven of righteousness"—the "true leaven"—worked extensively. Deeply did men feel in their secret heart the arrow of God's truth—the sword of the spirit; they were pierced, and cut, and wounded, until they cried aloud, and called upon the Lord Jesus to save. Religion was discerned to consist in something more than going to church on Sunday, supporting the parson by the orderly payment of his dues, and having the children christened at a proper age. "Repent ye, and be converted;" "He that believeth not, shall be damned;" and other like truths, rolled over the country in peals, as thunder from a surcharged cloud.

Pedicord, Cromwell, and Rev. William Budd, a local preacher, of New-Mills, or Pemberton, wrought together; and the old jail of Burlington was not unvisited. No! these servants of Christ went everywhere, anywhere, within proper bounds, to offer salvation to lost souls. The present venerable John Walker furnished the following interesting facts, which depict the

zeal, fearlessness, and faith of those men of God:—

“It must have been the year 1781, as those brethren travelled this circuit at the time, that the notorious refugee and tory, Molliner, ‘Joe Molliner,’ it is believed he was called, was captured and imprisoned. This man, while his countrymen were in the battle-field, fighting for liberty, equality, and all the rights of man; and the women of his country were at home, suffering all but starvation and death—as neglected fields, and empty granaries, and many other disorders, could fully display—this man, with a band of miscreants, lived by plunder, rapine, and blood; robbing those who had anything to lose; burning by fire, wantonly and maliciously, that which could not be conveyed to the recesses of the swamp, where they camped.

“The daring, lawless depredations of this Molliner and his gang—committed for several years, and all along the Atlantic shores, through the counties of Monmouth and Atlantic, by land and by water, by day and by night, taking advantage of the absence of the youthful and strong men, and committing intolerable outrages upon aged men and helpless females—at length roused the wrath of the people, until it took the form

of vengeance. Pursuit was instituted; and Molliner was taken and conveyed to Burlington, the seat of justice for the same county at that period. Here he was imprisoned for about six weeks; in the space of which time he was tried by the court, condemned, and sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead."

During the term of his imprisonment, the preachers we have named visited the unhappy wretch. William Budd, of New-Mills, a man of deep piety, sound mind, and respectable preaching abilities, joined with the loving, weeping Pedicord, and the powerfully persuasive Joseph Cromwell, to induce this soul, so guilty, and so nigh God's judgment-bar, to hear the words of warning, and to accept the offers of grace, through the crucified Jesus. He became alarmed, and repented most sincerely, confessing all his baseness. They uttered to him the words of invitation, and the trembling, repentant sinner believed on the name of Jesus, and was pardoned. Yes, this nefarious sinner, as those preachers testified, exhibited positive proof "that God, for Christ's sake, had pardoned all his sins." His soul was happy in the old jail of Burlington; the cell of the condemned criminal became the altar of his salvation—the place of his reception among the saved by grace.

What an act of majestic mercy ! The divinest attribute of Majesty is mercy ; and in this case the extent of God's clemency in Christ Jesus surpassed all human conceptions. Yet it was so ; the soul of that deeply stained sinner was washed in the blood of the Lamb of God ; and the prayers, tears, and songs, of the saved soul of Molliner, mingled with those of the servants of Jesus who brought him, perhaps for the first time in his life, the tidings of gospel grace, a knowledge of the plan of salvation, and the efficacy of faith and prayer, even in a case so desperate.

Some, perhaps, will say,—“ Ah, well, if so abominable a sinner as Joe Molliner can go to heaven, nobody need despair.” To this we would reply—“ This may have been his first and last call from God ; and he obeyed, repented, and believed ; and so was saved. But how many thousands, not so blackly dyed in sin, have resisted and rejected a thousand calls, as it were, and still remain, alas ! unsaved ; and they may so die, and be lost for ever. The ways of God are equal ; thy ways are unequal, O child of mortality.” How often, under such melancholy circumstances as those of Molliner, when the grace of God is displayed in the salvation of the culprit, do we hear such sophisti-

cal reasoning, and unwise murmurings, and unholy resolutions to continue in the neglect of the means of grace ; and yet these same persons expect salvation and happiness after death, forsooth, because "a thief upon the cross" was saved, or a murderer in his cell is converted, and leaves his dying testimony in proof of the amazing mercy of the Most High. The moral of this subject is. Let none presume ; let none despair.

On the day of the execution, our informant, then a young man seventeen years old, residing in Mount Holly, united with a friend and procured a horse ; and, mounted one behind the other, in this manner rode to the scene of the last act of Molliner's eventful life. Thousands of people, it was computed, were there collected, from all parts of the country, in all manner of conveyances, from the humble equestrian we have described, the ox-team, and its load of living curiosities from the interior of the Pines, even to the more aristocratic and heavy coach, of which but few could be produced, down to the thousands on that means of locomotion, the feet, that the Lord made for mortals. The military were also there, in their tarnished uniforms, and with their glittering arms. The music sounded dolefully as the wagon approached

containing Molliner, his coffin, and the faithful three—the ministers Pedicord, Cromwell, and Budd. The huge procession passed out of Burlington, over Ewling's bridge, to a place called "Gallows Hill." The wagon halted under the fatal tree, and the soldiers were arranged around the vicinity in a square. The dense mass of anxious spectators pressed closer and closer to the object on which all eyes were now fixed. Molliner arose, and gazed upon the crowd; his countenance seemed changed; he spoke at some length, acknowledged his guilt, and begged the people to pray for him; then, closing his eyes, he sat down and appeared to be in an agony of prayer.

Rev. Mr. Pedicord, standing in the wagon beside the coffin, gave out a text, and preached a suitable sermon, which affected all hearts within hearing of his sweetly musical voice, whose melting tones seldom failed to draw tears from all eyes. The people wept and sobbed while they heard. After the sermon a prayer was offered by one of the other preachers. On standing up again, Molliner requested them to sing, and a hymn was sung. At the close Molliner was deeply exercised, clapping his hands exultingly, and exclaiming, "I've found Him! I've found Him! Now I am ready." He

adjusted the rope to his neck, took leave of those around, who stepped down from the wagon, and then said again, "I am ready; drive off!" The horse started, the wagon passed from beneath his feet, he swung round a few turns, settled, struggled once, for a moment, then all was still! The spirit of the daring refugee, now an humble Christian, was in the presence of God!

In 1803, Rev. Joseph Totten and Rev. Joseph Osburn preached in the town of Mount Holly, in private houses. In 1796 the county-seat was removed from Burlington to Mount Holly, and the change of buildings, the erection of the new court-house, jail, &c., rendered it expedient for the Methodists to seek other accommodations. A school-house in the back street was obtained, in which Methodist preaching and class-meeting were held for several years. Here the first quarterly meeting ever convened in this town was rendered remarkable by a good work of grace, which commenced under the labours of Josiah Osburn. The class had been previously reduced in number to *two*, Mary Munroe and Prusilla the coloured woman: but now the work went on; some were added to the faithful two, and better days were looked for.

Methodism struggled onward in Mount Holly until the year 1809, before a church was built;

when—on the second appointment of brother Osburn as missionary, who laboured here much, and seemed the father of Methodism in this place—a church was begun. Rev. Gamaliel Bailey removed into the town in 1811; and soon after the class increased to thirty, (brother Bailey being the leader,) the church was dedicated, and the work of religion began to revive. The revival added to the members until the church numbered eighty souls; when a class for Saturday night was formed, and brother Clayton Monroe appointed leader, and the work prospered. Sabbath preaching in Mount Holly was commenced by brother Bailey. Among others who came to reside there was the Rev. William Mann, an efficient and zealous minister, whose sanctified learning enabled him to combat successfully the enemies of God and Methodism. Daniel Jones was also a useful local preacher, helping much in the Lord. Brother Samuel Risdon, at whose hospitable dwelling the itinerants always found a home and a welcome, was for many years the only person in the place to entertain the preachers. The wicked asserted that “the Methodists would eat Sammy Risdon out of house and home;” but the excellent brother and his family lived on for some time after the prophecy was uttered. At length

Clayton Monroe's house, after his marriage, became the only stopping-place for many years; and the croakers said the same of this faithful brother. But the Lord prospered him more and more; and the citizens of his native town conferred honours upon him, which were evidences of the high estimation in which he was held. He yet lives; and his house is still the home of the itinerant when occasion requires: neither has his family or others suffered by his liberality toward the Church of God.

Wesley Sterling was also an active, useful Methodist in this charge, for a number of years; and with Clayton Monroe, William N. Shinn, Esq., and a few others, constituted the main strength of the official membership of Mount Holly Church. A debt of five hundred dollars, due on the erection of the first church, remained for so many years unpaid, principal and interest, that it eventually amounted to fifteen hundred dollars.

The year 1833 was an era in the history of Methodism in Mount Holly. The church resolved to become a station. The Rev. John Buckley was appointed pastor, and the eminent abilities of that brother as a preacher, and his solid piety and strict practical Methodism, had the blessed effect of giving a powerful impulse

to Methodism. To the Revs. J. Osburn and J. Buckley, also, the members of Mount Holly church feel deeply indebted for the labours bestowed by them respectively, in the years of their efforts in the charge. From the early period of 1803, brother Osburn's memory was cherished as the father of Methodism in this charge. On his reappointment to the circuit in 1809, a gracious work added to the debt; and the church being erected, in which he was an active agent, but increased the obligations of the people; while those still living who knew him, will not cease to cherish the most respectful and grateful remembrance of his faithful labours among them.

In the year 1840, brother J. L. Lenhart was appointed to Mount Holly, with the object of constructing a new church; which, through the arduous and efficient exertions of that excellent brother in the ministry, was accomplished, and a noble edifice now stands, filled by a membership numbering several hundreds, and a most respectable and intelligent congregation.

As a confirmation of the general accuracy of our statements with respect to Methodism in Mount Holly, we are happy to present the following communication from the respected brother Clayton Monroe, of that town; and we

give the narrative in the words of our excellent brother, whose long and efficient services in the church merit a high place in the affectionate remembrance of all concerned, for the spread of true religion among the Methodists :—

“For several years there were but two Methodists in Mount Holly besides my mother, Mrs. Mary Monroe, and black Drusilla. These two used to go two and a half miles to a week-day preaching, as none was held in the town by the Methodist preachers. I think it was about the year 1805, that John Wesley Sterling, the son of old James Sterling, of Burlington, married, and settled in this place. He was an exhorter, and an official member of the church, but did not use his gift here much until the year 1807; when the Rev. Gamaliel Bailey came to reside in Mount Holly. He had been a travelling preacher, and was a Methodist, but now he carried on business here, and exercised as a local preacher. He had some zeal for the cause of Methodism, and began to preach on sabbath-days, in a school-house back of Main-street.

“The interest on the subject of religion increasing, the preachers of New-Mills Circuit were invited to make this one of their appointments. They complied; and this gave a cha-

racter and impetus to the work of the Lord here: the society increased in numbers, and brother Bailey formed a class of about thirty persons. This was the second rise of Methodism in Mount Holly. J. W. Sterling was appointed to lead the class, which advanced in spirituality, and the congregation increased so fast in numbers, that the meeting-place soon became too strait for them. In the summer of 1809 a quarterly meeting was held here by Rev. Joseph Totten, at that time presiding elder of New-Jersey District. The house was full of people, and a large number were outside, around the building. Brother Totten stood upon the door-steps, and preached as one sent by Heaven, and having authority to expound the word of God, (for there were giants in those days.) In the conclusion he told the people they must have a house for the Lord large enough to accommodate them; and from that time the efforts began, and were continued until 1810; when the society, with the help obtained from others, were enabled to build a church of brick, thirty-six feet square, upon which a debt of about five hundred dollars remained for several years.

“ During the years 1810, 1811, and 1812, the church being completed and occupied, the so-

ciety continued to increase. The Rev. William Mann became a local preacher, and helped much in the work, being a young man, and zealous in the cause of Methodism. Another class was formed to meet on Saturday evening, and brother Mann was appointed leader. In 1811 Rev. Joseph Osburn was appointed to this place. He was the only preacher, and had a few other places under his charge. Under his labours the society numbered about eighty members, when I came and settled here in the month of March, 1812. I joined brother Mann's class; and soon after, as he was often absent in the work of preaching, the preacher in charge, brother Osburn, without consultation or consent, appointed me leader of the class. Not daring to refuse, I had to abide by his official act; and, by the help of God, though unworthy to fill an office so important and responsible, I continue in it until the present time, doing what I can for the church or class.

“The work of religion in this, as in all other places, waxed and waned until the year 1833, when Mount Holly became a station, and the Rev. John Buckley the pastor. He had in connexion, as a sabbath afternoon appointment, Lumberton, a place two miles distant; and as a week evening appointment, Columbus, seven

miles distant. This distance of preaching-places was considered too hard work for one who elaborated his subjects as he did, but the Lord sustained him, and blessed his labours, especially in this place; so that, during the two years he was with us, Methodism obtained a character, extension, and influence, hitherto unknown in Mount Holly. The church was remodelled, and much improved; the singing in the choir and congregation, the classes, and indeed everything belonging to Methodism, was greatly improved through brother Buckley's exertions. After he left us the church continued to advance, until the old church became too strait for us; and in the year 1839 the cry was, "More room!" During the year 1840, under the pastoral charge of the Rev. John L. Lenhart, our present church was erected, at a cost of about eight thousand dollars. We have also a good parsonage-house near the church, which is entirely paid for. There is a debt of about two thousand five or six hundred dollars remaining on the church building; but measures are in operation for its liquidation. I should have stated before, that in the year 1815 we were included in Camden Circuit, and were favoured with the labours of Revs. Joseph Rusling and John Vanschoick: the latter became consumptive;

and while living resided in this town; and here he died in the second year—a saint indeed, a devoted minister of the New Testament.

“Methodism in Mount Holly has had a great deal to contend with since it took root the second time—the soil being preoccupied by other plants growing in nature’s garden, those persons who never could tolerate vital godliness. I must be allowed to say, that if all who attached themselves to our church had been faithful to the baptismal vows they made, we should long ago, instead of one church in Mount Holly, have had two or three large churches, well filled with people. But, after all, we have reason to thank God, and take courage and go on: for if the Lord had not sustained his own cause, amidst so many apostasies, the church would have sunk into oblivion: and to the blessed Trinity be the glory! A goodly number remained faithful, even from the day of their espousals to the Lord; but now nearly all the old stock have passed away—William N. Shinn and wife, and myself and wife, being all that remain of the church of 1812.”

We are grateful to the writer of the preceding, and feel peculiar pleasure in exhibiting his sketch of Methodism in Mount Holly.

CHAPTER XIX.

The fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live for ever.—BIBLE.

THIS volume of Reminiscences of Methodism in West Jersey, may be appropriately closed with a brief notice, or survey, of the condition of the Methodist fathers in the early times, as they were affected by the civil affairs of the State.

The fathers lived in times which, indeed, tried their very souls ; yea, and bodies and estates, if they possessed any of the last-named encumbrance. The British Methodist preachers who were sent as missionaries to America previously to the Revolution, when that war commenced, rendered themselves obnoxious to the patriotic portion of the people, by betraying their loyalty to the mother country. The unguarded speeches and imprudent acts of several of these ministers, rendered it expedient that they should desist from preaching, betake themselves to places of concealment, and make their way out of the country as speedily as possible. This was the case with nearly all of those preachers, except the noble-minded Asbury. And in the case of that innocent and excellent servant of Christ, so general and inveterate was the odium created

against Methodist preachers, that he was concealed in the State of Delaware, only appearing in public on a few occasions for a long time—perhaps for nearly two years.

Tradition sometimes tells truths of which the history of the times says nothing, and it is certain, that, in the reminiscences of the aged Methodists, we find that Captain Webb, one of the first Methodist preachers, was so imprudent in speaking against opposition to Britain, that he was obliged to hide away in the premises of a reputed Tory, near New Mills, for some months, before he could make his escape to England.

The Methodists generally, whether native or foreign, fell under suspicion, from the occasion given by the British preachers, and this was not allayed for a long time; seeing that the piety they professed, and the peaceful, divine spirit, which actuated and influenced those primitive fathers, rendered them averse to war, not only in their own case, as individuals, but from principle. There were but few Methodists in Jersey during that period; and still fewer who took an active part in contending for the liberties of the country, or even in supplying the wants of those who were so laudably engaged, when it was in their power so to do.

An old veteran of Methodism, from whom our views and information have been derived, said, "In those days the Methodists were charged with toryism; and, I am sorry to say, in too many instances it was true." We must, however, remember the peculiar condition of those Methodists, if this were the case: they had received those ministers of God, been taught by them, and had been converted through their instrumentality; and, in addition to the religious repugnance felt to war of any kind, they were specially led to regard the war against Britain—the "old country," "the beloved mother land"—as almost parricidal. Then again, in contrasting the resources of the belligerent parties, it seemed utterly impossible that the "handful of ragged, half-starved continentals," should ever eventually or ultimately triumph over the almost unbounded wealth, immense armies, and numerous fleets of the English government. But the love of country and of independence at length prevailed, especially when those feelings were aroused by the cruelties practised by the invading soldiery of that foreign power, whose prowess was so fearfully displayed in these very Jerseys—so often the scene of battle, skirmish, and rout, during the years of the war.

Perhaps no State in the Union suffered more than New-Jersey—East and West—and the spirit of toryism was *crushed out* of the people by the sufferings they were compelled to endure; insomuch, that now the descendants of those who lived in the days of that war, cannot be surpassed in true patriotism—whether Methodist or otherwise. The progress of Methodism in that period of the history of the church in West Jersey was most unavoidably slow; and in 1781, after the reaction had taken place, and the Methodists, both as ministers and members, stood fair before the world of their fellow-countrymen as real patriots—sound in the political faith of the day—even then, after all, religion was only next to naught in too many hearts; or its real professors, those who were really subjects of grace, alone cherished and laboured for the glory of God.

“Well do I remember,” said a Methodist of the old days, an octogenarian at the time he spake, “well do I remember the hard winter of 1780–81. The earth was frozen so deeply, that in many places the ground opened in vast chasms, of several yards in length, and a foot wide, and three and four feet deep.”

At the same time provisions were hard to be obtained; the rivers, creeks, and other water-

ways, were frozen almost to their bottom, so that oxen, and sleds loaded, passed over the water as on solid ground. The birds, and the wild animals of the West Jersey forests, died in vast numbers. "It was hard work to live in those days; and if a preacher could come around once in four or eight weeks, it was counted a great thing, and we would walk almost any reasonable number of miles to hear a sermon; and, remember, in 1782, there were but few Methodists in all West Jersey." True, in all this district, or circuit rather, were but three hundred and seventy souls, all told; so that there were not a great many Methodists to create any difficulty, if they were so disposed.

After the war, people began to think about their souls; the preachers were invited to extend their rides and their ministerial labours in new routes, and the preaching-places and stopping-places multiplied, as did also the converts to gospel grace. Yet it was arduous labour to eradicate the impressions left by the dissolute habits always generated in time of war. It was just like "grubbing a young forest," which "ought to have been a fine arable field." The allowance of the preachers was small, and yet they lived, for God was with them.

Methodism had many other obstacles to over-

come besides those already named. Among these was the opposition of the other religious denominations established in places whither the Methodist preachers were invited to labour; and some who ought to have been above slander, detraction, and evil surmising, were among the first and loudest in denouncing these "circuit-riders" as "wolves in sheep's clothing"—though some of them had precious little clothing to boast of, and perhaps that was made of "linsey-woolsey," an article famous in early days in West Jersey. The cry was also heard, "These are the false prophets foretold in the Scriptures, who shall, if possible, deceive the very elect of God. O, beware of them!"

But it all did not avail much. The Methodist preachers went onward, like the sent of God, heralds of the glorious array, both of ministers and members, that were to follow in future days—glorious as an army with banners, silencing the gainsayers by the blamelessness of their lives, the soundness of their doctrines, and the thunders of their Scriptural and natural eloquence.

Another serious hindrance to the progress of Methodism has been, that which our correspondent has termed the "apostasies of Methodists." Alas! some have fallen who stood in high places,

even in the pulpit. These we have touched but lightly upon, even when they came in our path : with any others that we may be obliged to notice, the same rule shall be observed ; for thus God dealeth with us, not in might of vengeance, but in the majesty of mercy. But had only a moiety of those professing to become subjects of converting grace under the ministry of the Methodists continued firm to the end, what a glorious army of redeemed souls, what an imposing number of churches, and what an extent of religious influence would now be witnessed ! As to the orators, the eloquent men of the early days of Methodism, we have satisfactory cause to say, that the greater part of the preachers were eloquent men ; that is, according to the rule Black Harry gave, which we have defined, "The eloquence of faith." Those ministers were eloquent, they were orators, just in proportion to their faith—just in the measure that they spoke from the heart. God was with them ; their hearts were in the work ; and when this is the case almost anybody can be eloquent. Theirs was the eloquence of faith—the oratory of the heart.

THE END.

